Joe Sacco's 'Informed Imagination': Representing War, Violence, and Everyday Life in *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992–95*

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Tutkielmani aihe on sarjakuvajournalismi sodan, väkivallan, ja jokapäiväisen elämän kuvaajana Joe Saccon Bosnian sotaa käsittelevässä teoksessa *Safe Area Goražde* (2000). Pyrin osoittamaan, kuinka sarjakuvan kuvalliset tekniikat yhdistettynä 1960-ja 70-luvuilla Yhdysvalloissa kukoistaneeseen 'uusjournalistiseen' (New Journalism), subjektiiviseen kerrontaan sitouttavat ja osallistavat lukijaa tavalla, joka tuo tämän lähemmäksi sarjakuvan henkilöhahmoja ja heidän kokemaansa sodan todellisuutta. Tärkeä tekijä tässä prosessissa on sarjakuvajournalistin oma hahmo ja kertoja, 'Joe', jonka kuvallinen läsnäolo toimii linkkinä sarjakuvan todellisuuden ja lukijan oman todellisuuden välillä. Keskeinen väittämäni on, että tämän opashahmon sekä lukijalle tuttujen arkielämän yksityiskohtien sisällyttäminen sodan todellisuuden kuvaukseen lähentää lukijaa tämän todellisuuden varsinaisiin kokijoihin. Pyrin osoittamaan, kuinka tämä lähentyminen osaltaan purkaa perinteisen uutisjournalismin toiseuttavaa vaikutusta, jonka seurauksena sodan kokeneet ihmiset usein pelkistetään passiivisiksi uhreiksi.

Sacco matkusti Bosniaan useita kertoja vuodesta 1992 vuoteen 1995 kestäneen sodan loppuvaiheessa ja sen päätyttyä kerätäkseen aineistoa teostaan varten. *Safe Area Goražde* kuvaa Saccon kanssakäymistä itäisessä Bosniassa sijaitsevan Goražden kaupungin asukkaiden kanssa sekä näiden sodanaikaisia kokemuksia. Näistä jälkimmäinen kerronnan taso esitetään sarjakuvan menneisyydessä, ja se pohjautuu visuaalisesti painotetuille haastatteluille. Lisäksi sotaa ja siihen johtaneita poliittisia ja historiallisia olosuhteita taustoitetaan historiallisen kerronnan tasolla, joka pohjautuu ulkopuolisiin aineistoihin ja edustaa perinteisempää, tutkivaa journalismia.

Tutkielmani teoriapohja rakentuu kahdesta osa-alueesta. Ensimmäisessä alaluvussa kuvailen subjektiivisen ja objektiivisen journalismin peruspiirteitä. Tämän lisäksi esittelen uusjournalistiselle suuntaukselle tyypillisiä kerronnallisia keinoja: dialogin, sisäisen monologin sekä erilaisten näkökulmien käyttö; henkilöitä ja tilaa kuvailevat yksityiskohdat; yhdistelmähahmot; sekä tapahtumien dramatisointi. Toisessa alaluvussa käsittelen sarjakuvan teoriaa keskittyen erityisesti niihin sarjakuvan elementteihin, jotka osallistavat lukijaa tarinan merkityksen muodostamisessa. Analyysiosio rakentuu samoin kahdesta luvusta. Ensimmäisessä luvussa tarkastelen erityisesti teoksessa esiintyviä sanallisen kerronnan tasoja, joilla lukija sekä tutustuu sarjakuvan hahmoihin ja näiden yksilöllisiin persoonallisuuksiin että vastaanottaa tietoa joka taustoittaa näiden hahmojen sotakokemuksia. Toisen luvun pääpainopiste on teoksen visuaalisessa kerronnassa ja sen osallistavassa vaikutuksessa, jonka myötä lukija osittain samaistuu teoksen hahmoihin ja osallistuu tapahtumien tulkitsemiseen.

Avainsanat: sarjakuvajournalismi, Joe Sacco, uusjournalismi.

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1. Introduction

On 2 September 2015, Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old refugee of the Syrian Civil War, drowned in the Mediterranean Sea after the boat on which his family was trying to reach the shores of Greece for refuge capsized. Kurdi's body washed up on a beach in Bodrum, Turkey, where it was discovered by Turkish police officers. Photographed by Turkish photojournalist Nilüfer Demir, images of the dead child lying on his stomach on the sand, barely out of reach of the waves, quickly spread around the world both via social media and various news publications. On 18 November 1994, seven-year-old Nermin Divovic was fatally shot in the head on the infamous Sniper Alley in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Pictures taken by photojournalist Enric Marti show the child lying face-down on the street in a pool of blood, his position almost identical to that of Kurdi's. On 8 June 1972, nine-year-old Kim Phuc was captured on film by Associated Press photographer Nick Ut as she was fleeing, naked and screaming, from a napalm attack issued by the U.S. military on a Viet Cong target in Vietnam. In the spring of 1943, a young Jewish boy was photographed in the Warsaw Ghetto with his hands raised and a terrified look on his face amongst a group of people carrying small bags and surrounded by armed German soldiers. While the identity and subsequent fate of the boy remain unknown, the context of the image suggests that the group was about to be transported to a concentration camp.

The abovementioned images are among the best-known of the respective conflicts during which they were taken. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag, using the example of the boy in the ghetto, argues that "[c]ertain photographs – emblems of suffering … can be used like memento mori, as objects of contemplation to deepen one's sense of reality; as secular icons" (119). Sontag continues by stating that this process "would seem to demand a sacred or meditative space," which the modern society is rarely able to provide (ibid.). Even given a situation in which the viewer can focus on a photograph in privacy, afterwards "the specificity of the photographs' accusations will fade; the denunciation of a particular conflict

and attribution of specific crimes will become a denunciation of human cruelty, human savagery as such" (ibid. 121–122). Furthermore, as is evident from the examples presented above, photographs of war often resemble each other, even when the events they depict take place several decades apart. Exemplifying her statement by the similarities between photographs of Bosnian prisoners in Omarska, a Serbian concentration camp, in 1992, and those of Holocaust survivors in 1945, Sontag notes that "photographs echo photographs" (84) and that "[t]he familiarity of certain photographs builds our sense of the present and immediate past" (85). The objectifying nature of the photograph and its close resemblance to earlier images might, in combination, produce for an individual viewer the desired effect presented by Sontag: a "general understanding that human beings everywhere do terrible things to one another" (116). Although Sontag places value on the general understanding and contemplation of cruelty and suffering, she concludes that the experience of suffering can never be truly understood nor imagined by an outside viewer: "[N]o one is looking out of the picture … [the] dead are supremely uninterested in the living" (125).

Photographs such as that of Alan Kurdi are powerful in their own right, and often some background information on the circumstances preceding or following the taking of the photograph accompany the image. News images of people affected by war and other conflicts do, however, predominantly focus on the suffering and loss experienced by the people depicted, although exceptions do appear, for example, in photo essays or photonovels. Several documentaries focusing on photojournalists working in conflict zones[1] have also been published in recent years, shedding light on the relationships forged between foreign journalists and local people, as well as on the everyday lives in these areas. A relatively new addition to the field of journalism is comics journalism, within which Joe Sacco is widely considered a pioneer. Rather than day-to-day news journalism, his works could, out of other visual mediums,

[1] See, for example, *McCullin* (2012) and *Only the Dead* (2015).

be compared to documentaries. The book-length scope of his major works allows the inclusion of the everyday lives of people living in conflict zones, and the medium of the comic enables the artist to take the story back in time and to locations that are inaccessible to the camera.

In this thesis, I will examine the literary and visual strategies and techniques employed by Joe Sacco in *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992–95* (2000) to engage the reader with the subjects and events that he reports on through the hybrid genre of comics journalism. I will argue that by representing the normalcy and familiarity of the everyday lives of the Goraždans in juxtaposition with the atrocities they have experienced and witnessed, Sacco attempts to both devictimize and repersonalize his subjects in the eyes of the reader, further strengthening this effect by including himself in the story as a focalizer and a first-person narrator. My attempt is to reach an understanding of the effect that this type of war reportage has on the reader through engagement and participation. I will use the phrase 'readerly engagement' in my analysis to refer to the process of the familiarization of the reader with the characters of the comic, as well as to the journalistic contract that exists between the reader and the comics journalist. 'Readerly participation' will be used to refer to the more active processes of identification and closure that a reader undertakes while reading a comic. Combined, these two form the overall 'readerly experience.' Since the role of the reader has not yet been extensively researched in comics theory, a more grounded definition of these terms is currently unavailable.

The recent years have witnessed a growing academic interest in the genre of comics, including major publications focusing on autobiographical comics, documentary comics, and comics journalism, each of which label could be, and has been, equally applied to Joe Sacco's work, although the common consensus now seems to be on the last one. Such publications include Randy Duncan, David Stoddard, and Michael Ray Taylor's *Creating Comics as Journalism, Memoir and Nonfiction* (2016); Daniel Worden's (ed.) *The Comics of*

Joe Sacco: Journalism in a Visual World (2015); and Hillary Chute's *Disaster Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form* (2016), of which the latter two will be used in this thesis. The most recent contribution to the field, Andrés Romero-Jódar's *The Trauma Graphic Novel* (2017), combines comics theory with trauma studies in the analysis of Sacco's and other comics artists' works. Romero-Jódar's book was unfortunately only available at the very final stage of finishing this thesis and is therefore not extensively used here.

The choice of pairing comics theory with a journalistic movement that flourished several decades before the rise of comics journalism might seem slightly arbitrary. After all, subjective reporting did not vanish along with the New Journalism movement, and especially in the era of the internet subjective accounts on all aspects of life are readily available for readers around the world. New Journalism has, however, not been completely forgotten in the new millennium. In 2005, Robert S. Boynton published a book titled *The New New Journalism: Conversations with America's Best Non-Fiction Writers on Their Craft*, for which he interviewed nineteen writers representing the "continued maturation of American literary journalism" ("Introduction", par. 1). According to Boynton, the works of these writers build on the legacy of New Journalism, on the "legitimacy Wolfe's legacy has brought to literary nonfiction, and … the concurrent displacement of the novel as the most prestigious form of literary expression" (par. 2). The legitimation of subjective and experimental forms of journalism is one of the reasons by which I justify the inclusion of New Journalism in this thesis – after all, journalism in the form of a comic book is undeniably experimental. The other reason is that the works on New Journalism on which the theoretical framework of this thesis will be constructed provide a set of specific tools for my analysis: literary devices that will be helpful in explaining how Sacco's comics journalism engages and participates the reader.

Although the connection between Sacco's comics journalism and of New Journalism has been recognized by several scholars, the link is usually only briefly introduced

with focus on their shared subjectivity in reporting. Chute establishes this relationship somewhat further by identifying the four new journalistic literary devices defined by Wolfe in an endnote to her analysis of Sacco's work: "scene-by-scene construction, realistic full dialogue, 'third-person point of view' in addition to the first-person view of the journalist, and the recording of everyday details within a scene" (*Disaster Drawn* 334). Chute highlights the significance of the application of these new journalistic devices in comics:

> "Comics can deepen all of these; it is … the echt New Journalism, the culmination of imagination and investigation outlined during the Vietnam War. During the 1960s … comics also reinvented itself in the underground, without commercial strictures, as a serious form for self-expression. Both movements flourished – and today meet in work such as Sacco's" (ibid.).

Chute's statement, however, is merely presented as an endnote to her analysis of Sacco's comics, leaving the question of *how* these devices are utilized in comics unanswered. This *how* will be central to my analysis: the question I attempt to answer is how Sacco's combination of the literary techniques of New Journalism with the visual techniques of comics produce a both subjective and verifiable depiction of his subjects, and how the reader is drawn into their wartime experiences.

Joe Sacco is best known for his graphic novels *Palestine* (2003)[2] and *Safe Area Goražde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992–95* (2000), which portray his experiences in these two conflict zones in the early 1990s. His later works include *The Fixer: A Story from Sarajevo* (2003), in which the Bosnian War is revisited from the point of view of the Bosnian paramilitaries, and *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009), in which the Palestinian narrative is shifted back in time to the 1956 massacres committed by Israeli troops in the towns of Rafah and Khan Younis. Sacco received a degree in journalism from the University of Oregon in 1981, but his frustration with the American journalistic ideals of objectivity and balance (Sacco, *Journalism* xiii) soon pushed him away from the journalistic profession and towards earning a living out of

[2] Palestine was originally published as a series in 1993-1996.

his old hobby of drawing comics. Inspired by representatives of the New Journalism movement of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Michael Herr and Hunter S. Thompson, Sacco came to combine the medium of the graphic novel with a personal, subjective rather than objective, journalistic stance, resulting in the distinctive subgenre of 'comics journalism', of which *Palestine* and *Safe Area Goražde* (henceforth referred to as *SAG*) serve as examples. In this thesis, I will focus specifically on the latter, although some examples from Sacco's other works will be presented when necessary. The reason for choosing *SAG* over *Palestine* for the central primary material is that the latter is at times quite heavily invested in the personal experiences of the reporter and on the critique of his own actions as a participant in the tradition of Western conflict reporting. While *SAG* still presents the reporter's personal experience and narrative as a point of focalization, the focus is less on the otherness and awkwardness of the reporter and more on his subjects, their familiarity and ordinariness, as well as the extraordinary circumstances into which the war has thrown them. Thus, it might be argued that *SAG* is, despite Sacco's objection to objectivity, a more detached and objective piece of journalism, in the sense of non-alienated objectivity, which will be discussed later in the theory section.

Sacco first visited Bosnia in the autumn of 1995, close to the end of the Bosnian War, one of the violent outcomes of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. One of the six UN-designated Safe Areas in Bosnia,[3] the enclave of Goražde, located deep within Serb-held territory and at this point inhabited almost exclusively by Bosnian Muslims, had suffered under siege and shelling for over three years, practically isolated from the rest of the world. In his introduction to *SAG*, Christopher Hitchens describes the perception of the town held among foreign journalists to have been that of "infrequent faint radio transmissions, rumors of mayhem and rape, of famine and even of cannibalism" (*SAG*, "Introduction" 1). Sacco, alongside some fellow journalists, travelled to Goražde along one of the first UN convoys that was let through

[3] The other United Nations Safe Areas were Srebrenica, Sarajevo, Žepa, Tuzla and Bihać.

the siege to deliver food and medical supplies to the enclave due to a ceasefire issued by the UN and NATO. Unlike most of the others, he returned to the town several times during the following months, made friends among the locals and participated in their everyday lives, as well as recorded interviews and other material for his comic. He experienced the excitement and absurdities surrounding the Dayton peace negotiations together with the Goraždans, and was present to record the emptiness experienced by the locals after the controversial peace[4] was finally announced.

The narrative of *SAG* is layered in both chronological and narrative sense, in addition to which the interrelationship of verbal and visual elements produces a dimension of its own. My analysis will be divided into two sections, of which the first one will predominantly concentrate on the verbal elements and the narration of the comic, while the second one will primarily be centered on the visual characteristics and dramatization of events. Since the combination of the two is ever-present in this genre, I will here shortly describe the construction of the story as a whole. Chronologically, the narrative shifts between the present of the comic, in which Sacco's cartoon self participates in the action, and the past of the comic, in which the war experiences of Sacco's interviewees are visualized. In the narratological sense, the story is presented on three levels.

Firstly, there is the story of Sacco's cartoon self and his personal, subjective experience of the town and its inhabitants, which functions as the backbone to the overall story. Sacco's cartoon self will, for the sake of differentiation between the various roles undertaken by the author in the story, be later referred to simply as "Joe". Joe is drawn as a cartoonish caricature, with his mouth often hanging ajar and his glasses permanently dimmed over. Interestingly, in the few scenes where he is presented without his glasses, the eyes are either

[4] The Dayton Peace Agreement, formally signed in Paris on 14 December 1995, divided Bosnia into two entities: The Muslim-Croat Federation and the Bosnian Serb Republic (Silber and Little 1995, 377). The only eastern enclave still under the control of the Bosnian Government, Gorazde remained part of the former, separated from Serb territory only by a narrow land link leading to Sarajevo (372).

covered in some way or drawn from an angle that obscures them. Contrasted with the wide array of expressions and emotions conveyed through the eyes of the other characters, Joe's eyelessness could be interpreted as a symbol of his outsider status as an observer, or as representing a mirror or a lens through which the experiences of the Goražd ans are further reflected to the reader. Joe's character and Sacco's personal narration will later be analyzed using Scott McCloud's notions of facial iconography in comics and the new journalistic technique of *interior monologue* (Hellmann 25). In addition, previous research on Sacco's work will be combined with these for establishing an understanding of readerly participation through the character of the protagonist.

The second level of narrative presents the individual stories of the locals and refugees from neighbouring towns. This level is further divided into two sub-levels. On the first level are the interactions between Sacco and the locals, which include the depiction of everyday activities intertwined with interview situations and casual discussions. Here, Sacco is an active participator rather than an observer. He lives with the family of his guide and friend, Edin, who also functions as his local 'fixer.' [5] The second sub-level consists of individual stories based on interviews and depicts past events. This level of the narrative is distinguishable by a black background and the installation of the stories within quotation marks. In these witness sections the artist and his cartoon self step back and hand the stage over to the experiencers themselves, only occasionally intruding with clarifying questions, thus providing emphasis on the documentation of the interview situation. The comic components of, for example, the *gutter* (McCloud 60–93; Groensteen 112–114) and the *panel/ frame* (Groensteen 39–56), as well as the new journalistic techniques of *composite characterization*, *full dialogue*, *the dramatic scene*, and *status details* (Hellmann 25–30) will be utilized to analyze this level of the narrative.

The third level of narrative presents the 'big picture' of the Bosnian War and, more

[5] A 'fixer' is a local person who arranges, for example, meetings and local transportation for a foreign journalist.

specifically, the status of Goražde as a UN-designated Safe Area. Based on Sacco's research after his visits to Bosnia, this level represents a more conventional, objective journalistic dimension. The narrative consists of distinguishable text-boxes (rather than word balloons) that provide background information for the historical and political aspects of the Bosnian War, such as earlier conflicts between the three major ethnicities in Bosnia; the circumstances leading to the disintegration of Yugoslavia; and the actions (and inactions) undertaken by the international community to resolve the conflict after years of war and ethnic cleansing. This textual information is visually juxtaposed with scenes of bombings, groups of refugees fleeing their homes, and close-ups of politicians central to the conflict, such as Slobodan Milošević, Radovan Karadžić and Bill Clinton,[6] making official statements. These images are generally drawn to resemble news photographs or snippets of television broadcasts. In addition to these, maps illustrating geographical locations and the progression of military actions increase the sense of verifiability. Besides providing a historical framework for the reader, this level also serves as a critical commentary on the role of the international community and the 'official' narratives of the war, since the visual and textual aspects repeatedly contradict each other.

[6] Respectively, at the time of the Bosnian War: President of Serbia, leader of the Bosnian Serbs, and president of the United States.

2. Theory: Journalism and Comics

In this chapter, I will establish the theoretical framework for my analysis of Sacco's comics journalism in *SAG*. The chapter is comprised of two subsections, each of which introduces components that will later be combined in the analysis chapters. The first section presents the objective and subjective traditions of journalism, the turbulent relationship between the two stances, and some more recent theories on how the methods of these traditions could be seen and used as complementary, rather than rival, to each other. In addition, I will describe the openly subjective New Journalism movement of the 1960s and 1970s in more detail, as well as the literary techniques commonly used by new journalists. The second part will focus on the 'comics' aspect of Sacco's comics journalism, beginning with an introduction of the genre and its general formal characteristics, and progressing to the definition elements that specifically impact or guide the reader of a comic.

It should be noted that although elements of, for example, reader response theory, media studies, or war journalism would have been useful for my analysis, I have chosen to narrow my theoretical framework in order to maintain focus within the limited scope of this thesis. I have also abstained from providing a general politico-historical overview of the Bosnian War, as I deemed that the complexities of the conflict and its circumstances would have diverted unnecessarily from my objective of highlighting the *how* aspects of Sacco's comics journalism. Relevant information concerning the war will, however, be provided within the analysis.

2.1. Subjective and Objective Journalism

Joe Sacco has on several occasions criticized traditional American journalism for its strict adherence to the ideals of balance and objectivity, instead placing himself and his chosen medium of comics journalism within the tradition of openly subjective journalism, earlier represented, for example, by the New Journalists of the 1960s and 1970s. Taken the genre of Sacco's work into consideration, this stance is not simply a matter of choice. As Sacco himself observes in the preface to *Journalism*,[7] the act of drawing itself contains features such as choice and interpretation that make comics an "inherently subjective medium" (xi–xii). Compared to photography, another visual medium of reporting, comics journalism does not involve the element of luck needed for the perfect capturing of a scene: "[a] cartoonist 'snaps' his drawing at any moment he or she chooses" (ibid.). Furthermore, a photograph of any given moment in time is generally perceived as a literal and verifiable representation of that moment, while a drawing "[defies] verification" (xi) and is created "with the essential truth in mind, not the literal truth" (xii).

However, a work could surely not be called journalistic if it broke completely free from the basic rules and ethics of journalism, such as accuracy and verifiability.[8] Sacco notes that the elements of subjectivity and interpretation do not actually offer a comics journalist freedom from these obligations, but rather add to them, in that he or she needs to investigate the visual details of the scene, as well as the factual ones, in order to be able to transform his or her interpretation into a visual representation of the aforementioned 'essential truth' (xii). For the accurate presentation of the visual details of the scenes he portrays, Sacco relies on visually oriented interviews, as well as photographs and other visual footage, which he combines into a reconstruction that is based on, using his own term, his "*informed* imagination" (xii, original

[7] A 2012 collection of Sacco's short pieces of comics journalism, with topics ranging from a war crime trial in Hague to Chechnyan refugees and to Iraqis interrogated and tortured by American troops.
[8] See, for example, the SPJ Code of Ethics. www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp

emphasis). Free from both the temporal and spatial limitations that bind, for example, a photographer, this combination of methods further enables him to visually depict scenes that have taken place in the past and/or in locations generally inaccessible to the public, such as prison cells or, as in *SAG*, a town under siege. In his own words, he strives to reach a level of detail and accuracy sufficient to "satisfy an eyewitness that my drawn depiction essentially represents his or her experience" (ibid.). In pursuance of this goal of a truthful representation of a past event, Sacco builds upon extensive background research, as well as attempts to literally trace the footsteps of his subjects, as he notes in an interview: "If possible, I'll walk over the same ground that they're depicting" (Gilson par. 10). In this sense, Sacco's mode of work could also be compared to the visual form of historical documentary, rather than, or in addition to, that of the photograph.

Indeed, especially the construction of the eyewitness sections of *SAG* closely resemble the typical structure of a documentary film: the 'camera' zooms in on the witness and focuses on him/her for a number of frames, after which the reader/viewer is presented with a reconstruction of the events described by the witness, overlapping with an ongoing narration of what is taking place. At the end of the section the focus returns to a close-up of the witness. Especially regarding these eyewitness sections, *SAG* could, for example, be classified within the literary genre of the documentary (postmodern) novel, described by Leonora Flis as characterized by "a duality of constructed memories and representations of history" (Flis qtd. in Mazi-Leskovar 182). According to Flis, documentary novels both "display verifiable links to the empirical world", while at the same time being "products of the author's imagination" (32), further characterized by postmodern features such as fragmentation, lack of closure, multiplicity of perspectives, and self-reflexivity (31–33). I have, however, chosen to discuss comics journalism here predominantly within the similar, but more established framework of literary journalism. It should be noted that John Hartsock's overview of literary journalism does

not specifically include comics journalism, perhaps because the focus of his work is the history of the genre rather than its possible future modifications. The framework of literary journalism is still useful for the purposes of this thesis, especially regarding New Journalism, the latest wave of literary journalism included in Hartsock's overview of the subgenre.

According to Calcutt and Hammond, the evolution of journalistic objectivity can historically be traced to three time periods and circumstances arising in said time periods: "the emergence of the bourgeoisie public sphere in the eighteenth century; the development of the mass-circulation press as business in the late nineteenth century; and the institutionalization of professional norms of objectivity and impartiality in newspaper and radio journalism in the early twentieth century" (21). The first-mentioned gave rise to the idea of 'public interest', as opposed to that of the elite ruling class. Associated with public interest was the concept of the 'marketplace of ideas', which proposed that the objective truth would arise when different ideas were freely allowed to compete in open, public discourse, in a similar way that goods would be allowed to compete in a free market. However, as Calcutt and Hammond further note, during the second time period, after the bourgeoisie had developed into a new, capitalistic elite, the freedom of ideas became again more restricted, and in the 19th century "the commercially oriented, advertising-funded mass circulation press drove out radical newspapers and drastically narrowed the range of what was included in the 'marketplace of ideas'" (ibid.).

Before returning to the timeframe established by Calcutt and Hammond and moving on to the third time period and the circumstances surrounding the early twentieth century, it is noteworthy to distinguish another 19th-century development that greatly contributed to the rise of the ideal, or myth, of journalistic objectivity as described by Ivan Gaber: the invention of the telegraph in the US and the resulting standard of news reporting, the 'inverted pyramid', which is still, according to Gaber, to be "found at the core of much journalism teaching" (31). The inverted pyramid model means "the notion that a news story

must be structured with the most important aspects of the story coming first – classically the 'Who, What, How, Where, When and Why' followed by the next most important, with the least important at the bottom" (ibid.). The labelling of this format as an essentially objective operative procedure is, however, not by any means unproblematic. The fact remains that any pyramid must be constructed by someone, a subject, as Gaber also notes: "deciding the gist … involves essentially subjective judgments" (32).

As mentioned above, Calcutt and Hammond place the third time period of importance for the rise of objectivity at the early 20th century, namely the interwar period, stating that this development took place "hand-in-hand with a concerted and conscious effort to 'manage' a volatile and dangerous public opinion" after the public's disillusionment with wartime propaganda and the resulting loss of the credibility of the press (22). In Britain, these circumstances coincided with the establishment of the BBC and its idea of the 'impartiality' of news broadcasting, as opposed to its broadsheet rival, "the government's propaganda sheet, *The British Gazette*" (ibid.). Hartsock notes a similar development having taken place in the United States, where "the patriotic if not jingoistic tone of mainstream, objectified news" during the war, combined with the severe censorship of journalism under the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 and the role of many journalists as propagandists also led to the disillusionment of the public, which was countered by efforts to write purely objective news (154–155). It is, however, important to keep in mind that the term 'objectivity' has somewhat transformed during the century after the ideal was taken into extensive use. As Marc Singer perceptively notes, in its original meaning of the 1920s, "'objectivity' described the pursuit of a scientific method of verification and transparency that could authenticate and validate journalistic work," whereas later the meaning has drifted away from verification and towards impartiality, leading to the 'viewlessness' or 'view from nowhere' of journalists rigorously following the ideal (68).

As Singer observes, scholars examining Sacco's work "typically celebrate Sacco for challenging journalism's presumption of objectivity," overlooking the fact that he "also aligns his work with the practices of objective journalism" (67). This is not only true in the way in which he strives for accuracy, noted in the introduction to this section, but also in the more negative sense of impartiality, resulting in viewlessness in some respects. Singer argues, that Sacco is at times "reluctant to question, criticize, or judge his subjects," thus "[falling] back on his own posture of journalistic detachment … a simple muting of his own views" (72). Furthermore, while especially the storyline of *Palestine*, which is the topic of Singer's analysis, is characterized by Sacco's eagerness to criticize himself and the practices of Western media in general, "he conceals his opinions when they would most contest the views of the people he writes about" (79) in order not to "alienate his sources" (78). To some extent, this insight applies to *SAG*, as well, although it is less pointedly subjective and autobiographic in tone than its predecessor. The targets of criticism in *SAG* are other Western journalists and the ineffectiveness of the international community in dealing with the war and the siege of Goražde, but the actions and attitudes of the common Goraždans are mostly presented without critique. Even when Sacco's emotional attachment to his subjects is evident in the story, he is, in a sense, tiptoeing around them. However, there are some scenes in which he voices his own discomfort with a situation. In one of these a local man questions Joe on his purported lack of interest in the massacre of Srebrenica in a quite menacing manner. Joe is drawn retreating into a corner, thinking: "I wanted out, out of there … I wanted to put a hundred thousand miles between me and Bosnia, between me and these horrible, disgusting people and their fucking wars and pathetic prospects…" (*SAG* 192).

The ideal of objectivity, or in Sacco's words, "American journalism's Holy of Holies" (*Journalism* xiii) is, according to Hartsock, still the prevailing standard of reporting today (155). The six tenets of this ideal include factuality, fairness, non-bias, independence,

non-interpretation, and neutrality and detachment (Ward 19). Throughout the history of this ideal, it has also been questioned and challenged by journalists who have, like Sacco, remained sceptical about the applicability of these standards in the actual work of reporting. Furthermore, a journalist claiming to be perfectly objective is, in fact, only transmitting the subjective point of view of someone else. The objective 'official' view of an event is no less constructed than a subjective interpretation of that same event. John Hellmann, in his work on New Journalism, rejects the idea of the existence of a purely objective truth: "Admirers of conventional journalism have portrayed the conflict with new journalism as one of objectivity versus subjectivity and fact versus fiction. However, it is actually a conflict of a disguised perspective versus an admitted one, and a corporate fiction versus a personal one" (4). Instead of a subjective news account being fictitious at heart, Hellmann claims that a subjective (or new) journalist uses fictional techniques as a method to communicate fact, as it "provides the most effective means of dramatizing the complexities and ambiguities of experience – the dynamic and fluid wholeness of an event" (18).

According to Hartsock, literary journalism has evolved in its modern sense in three waves, each of which has emerged in a period of "social and cultural transformation and crisis" (2000, 42) and declined again due to changes in circumstances and popular ideologies. Hartsock places these stages at the turn of the 19th century (the 1890s–1910s), the latter half of the interwar period (1930s and 1940s), and the period of social turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s (153). While the timespan of Hartsock's study ends with the New Journalism movement of the third stage, it could be argued that a fourth stage has been effective since the 1990s. For example, Calcutt and Hammond state that especially journalists reporting on wars and other crises in the 1990s often openly refused to adhere to the standards of neutrality and detachment, instead "couching their reports in personal, often highly emotive terms" (25). In contrast, "[j]ournalists who did not toe the emotionally correct line risked opprobrium for appearing

heartless" (26). It should be taken into account that the 1990s was a period riddled with humanitarian crises around the globe, as well as the one that returned full-scale war to European soil after a long period of peace with the fall of Yugoslavia and the resulting Balkan Wars. Moreover, considering that these conflicts were widely transferred via television broadcasts into the living rooms of the public, it is no wonder that a traditional, detached style of reporting might have seemed 'heartless'.

On the other hand, highly emotive conflict reporting is not without its risks, either. Attachment might lead to bias and overinterpretation, which might result in the reporter's personal opinion of an event becoming the only account that reaches the public, and thus 'The Truth' about said event. As Calcutt and Hammond state: "The traditional professional routines of journalism were more than mere 'rituals': practices such as fact-checking, or seeking out both sides of the story, offered ways to overcome the limitations of one's own subjective impressions and get at the truth" (26). Calcutt and Hammond further argue that objectivity should not be understood as the opponent of subjectivity, but rather as its corollary:

> Subjectivity is not reducible to personal opinion. It is, properly, the consciousness of human subjects acting with other subjects in making the world our object. We subjects first make the world our object; then we make it again, this time as the object of our subjectivity. Objectivity arises from the collective application of subjectivity in the contentious process of producing mental objects – knowledge – designed to capture that material object – the external world – which we subjects have previously made. Objectivity is the condition of those mental objects which are the further objectification of the objective world – the world made into their object by human subjects (19).

According to Calcutt and Hammond, objectivity in journalism has, in reality, been critizised and countered by open subjectivity because of "its alienated form", in which journalists failed to recognize themselves as subjects who were supposed to create an object – the news story – for other subjects to consume (27). At the same time, readers "were immobilized by the weight of objects known as facts [and] equally alienated from themselves as autonomous subjects" (ibid.). Calcutt and Hammond thus defend the existence of objective reporting in the non-

alienated form described above, claiming that the practice of turning away from objectivity has resulted in the modern culture becoming "characterized by the restless, weightless movement of subjectivity, in which self-presentation by subjects becomes a continuous process that has no object except the process itself" (ibid.).

I would argue that Sacco's critique of journalistic objectivity is, in fact, directed against objectivity in its alienated form, rather than the ethics and ideals of traditional journalism per se. As noted earlier, many of Sacco's journalistic methods do actually comply with the notion of non-alienated objectivity promoted by Calcutt and Hammond. Other scholars have made similar attempts to that of Calcutt and Hammond of reformulating the idea of journalistic objectivity. For example, Stephen Ward suggests the notion of 'pragmatic objectivity', by which the journalist might reject the traditional objective standards of neutrality and detachment (22), while at the same time adhering to "accurate and faithful description of events," "good reporting methods and standards," and "presenting information in a manner fair to all sources and to rival viewpoints" (19). For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is sufficient to note the fluidity and complexity of the relationship between the objective and subjective stances of reporting. Even though Sacco, as well as the new journalists of the 1960s, have chosen to embrace the subjective, standards such as verification and accuracy are by no means abandoned.

As noted earlier, Hartsock defines the common factor for the three waves of literary journalism to be that they all have evolved in time periods characterized by "social and cultural transformation and crisis" (42). For the rise of the third wave in the United States in the form of New Journalism these circumstances included phenomena such as the civil rights movement, assassinations of public figures, the drug culture, rising environmental awareness, and the Vietnam War (192). The most prominent works of New Journalism include Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1965), Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night* (1968), Tom Wolfe's

Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test (1968), and Michael Herr's *Dispatches* (1978) (ibid.). Besides these notable writers, Hunter S. Thompson with his signature subgenre of satirical "gonzo journalism" (202) is generally placed within the same movement. The two main differences between conventional journalism and New Journalism, according to John Hollowell, are "the reporter's relationship to the people and events he describes … and … the form and style of the news story [which] is radically transformed through the use of fictional devices borrowed from short stories and novels" (22).

This mixing of fictional elements with journalistic, factual accounts has been scorned upon by some of the opponents of New Journalism. For example, cultural critic Dwight MacDonald labels Tom Wolfe's writing 'parajournalism': "a bastard form, having it both ways, exploiting the factual authority of journalism and the atmospheric license of fiction" (MacDonald qtd. in Hollowell 44). More general critique of this subgenre include claims of new journalists turning reporting into entertainment, the possible distortion of facts with the use of direct dialogue and dramatic scenes, as well as concerns that the new style "would replace the hard-won tradition of objectivity with a cult of mere egotism" (44–45). However, Hollowell states that the intention of the representatives of the movement was never to eliminate conventional journalism, but rather to offer a "new voice" and new ways to record the complexity of the events taking place in the "most violent decades in American life" (46–47). According to Hollowell, "the new journalist's motive is to achieve a literary style comparable to fiction and to portray characters with psychological depth," (25) and "in the best new journalism, vivid and colourful writing complements careful research" (31). In comics journalism, the additional visual elements obviously add their own effect to the vividness of the story. At the same time, the burden of verification is extended to the drawn details – the interviews and background research must be visually oriented, as well as provide the facts for the verbal narration.

The central literary techniques of New Journalism as identified by Tom Wolfe and listed by Hollowell are: *the dramatic scene*; *full dialogue*; *status details*; and *point of view*. Hollowell continues Wolfe's list with two narrative devices commonly used in New Journalism: *interior monologue* and *composite characterization*, noting that besides these six basic devices, techniques such as flashbacks, foreshadowing and inverted chronology have also been used by new journalists (26). Hollowell points out that these 'fictive' techniques had infrequently been used by journalists prior to the 1960s, but only then "they coalesced in the unique and sophisticated style of the new journalism" (31).

The abovementioned techniques will here be described in the order in which their application into the comics medium will take place in the analysis sections. The devices of *full dialogue*, *interior monologue*, and *point of view* will be analyzed predominantly with regard to the verbal narration, whereas *status details*, *composite characterization*, and *the dramatic scene* will specifically be applied to the visual realm of the comic. According to Hollowell, the new journalistic technique of recording dialogue in full counters the traditional 'inverted pyramid' model of reporting, which places "the most significant facts and quotations," or the "who-what-where-when" at the very beginning of the text (27). Although some quotations might be used in a 'straight news' story, the limited space excludes the possibility of recording characteristics and nuances of speech in more detail (ibid.). Hollowell exemplifies the usage of this device with an excerpt from new journalist James Mills' article "The Detective", in which the 'tough cop' speech of the protagonist is recorded in full dialogue: "No one talks unless I ask something. Because I won this little show, right? So we play this ball game my way … all of you germs walk up this street to Broadway and get lost" (ibid.).

The elements included in a new journalistic story undergo a process of selection – in his analysis of Capote's *In Cold Blood*, Hollowell notes Capote's choice of "scenes and conversations with the most powerful dramatic appeal … that contribute cumulatively to his

dramatic purposes" (71). Besides the effect of dramatization, the dialogue presented by Capote "takes on hidden meaning not apparent in its original context" (70). As is characteristic for a comic, in Sacco's *SAG* full dialogue is placed within the visual container of the *word balloon*, with both the form and content of the balloon contributing to the nuances, dramatic effect, and the hidden meanings of the conversations. In the analysis chapter, this interplay between the word balloon and the dialogue presented within it will be elaborated on in more detail. Of the interrelated concepts of *point of view* and *interior monologue*, the latter also functions specifically on the verbal level when applied to the comics medium, whereas the former operates on both levels. On the verbal level, all three devices are used to emphasize, comment, and contrast the visual elements they accompany.

Point of view encompasses "the portrayal of [a] character as if the reader understood the person's mental processes, or alternatively, from the viewpoint of others significant in his life" (28). A complementary to full dialogue, this device is often used to "reveal the interior thoughts and emotions of the main characters," for example by imitating their patterns of speech and sentence structures in the construction of the narrative (28–29). The related technique of *interior monologue* is, in effect, a specific adaptation of *point of view*, in that it presents events "*as if* a subject were thinking them" (ibid, original emphasis). Hollowell's example, derived from Gay Talese's *The Kingdom and the Power*, displays this device within a third-person subjective narration, through which Talese aims to "reveal the thoughts and attitudes" of A. M. Rosenthal, an assistant managing director for the *Times* (30): "…Rosenthal momentarily looked up from the stories that he was reading and gazed around the room … *they must despise me*, he thought, being both irritated and saddened by the possibility, *they must really hate my guts*" (Talese 353, qtd. in Hollowell 30, original emphasis).

The personal narration takes place in *SAG* both as the witness testimonies of Sacco's interviewees in the witness sections, and Sacco's own personal narration. In the latter

sense, the narrator often assumes the role of the *histor*, "a speaking voice familiar from the time of ancient historians and rhetoricians," employed previously, for example, by Tom Wolfe in *Acid Test* (141). The role of the *histor* enables the narrator to "evaluate and to present his changing perceptions of events and personalities as new discoveries – as revelations" (142). Sacco's cartoon self Joe and Sacco-the-narrator adopt vastly different roles in *SAG*, as will be shown in the analysis. In my analysis, I have chosen to apply *point of view* on a broader scale to the historical level of the verbal narration, since Hollowell's definition of *interior monologue* is sufficient for the analysis of the personal narrative level. Moreover, personal narration is often both complemented and contrasted by historical narration in *SAG*, with the different temporalities adding to the mixture. In addition, since much of what a literary account might reveal about a person's emotions and attitudes through verbal narration is often depicted visually in a comic, *point of view* will also be discussed with regard to the analysis of the characters in *SAG*.

Besides the verbal narration, much of the emotions of the characters in *SAG* is captured by the highly detailed imagery of their faces, bodily postures, and the illusion of movement. The psychological depth is further enhanced by the technique of presenting *status details* – gestures and manners, styles of clothing, and other minutiae concerning both the people and their surroundings (28). As Hollowell notes, these "atmospheric details" introduce the reader to the world of the characters, and adds to the "precision of characterization" (ibid.). As the other techniques, the usage of *status details* is also enabled by "the new freedom and extended length possible in the new journalism," (ibid.) in contrast to the more restricted scope of a traditional journalistic account.

In addition to *status details* Hollowell's concept of *composite characterization* will be applied to the analysis of the visual depiction of the characters in *SAG*, together with elements of comics theory such as *facial iconography* and *inhabitation*. A *composite character*

denotes “a person who represents a whole class of subjects” and is “always supported by careful interviewing and researching” (30). An example of such a character, offered by Hollowell, is the protagonist of new journalist Gail Sheehy’s book *Hustling* (1970) called “Redpants”, a composite of multiple prostitutes interviewed and observed by Sheehy in Times Square, New York (ibid.). While the use of composite characterization in journalistic works was at the time criticized for being dishonest, since “the reader may be deluded into thinking he is reading about an actual person” (ibid.), Sheehy defends her choice of protagonist: “…the quotes and anecdotes supporting [the character] are assembled from several years of acquaintance with their lives … The function is to present the life while protecting the privacy of perfectly decent people” (Sheehy qtd. in Hollowell 31).

In the analysis of *SAG*, this notion will specifically be applied to the analysis of characters who are not individually identified in the comic, such as Serbian soldiers, victims of atrocities, and people depicted in the distant past for whom no eyewitness description or other material is available. Finally, the analysis will turn to the construction of *the dramatic scene* in *SAG*, or “the reconstruction of the story as the action unfolds … rather than through a summary of the events,” defined by Hollowell as “[p]robably the most important fictional technique employed by the new journalists” (26). Hollowell exemplifies this device with Tom Wolfe’s literary reconstruction of conductor Leonard Bernstein’s account of his insomniac fabulation of an upcoming Black Panther Defense Fund event, in which Wolfe “shows the action moving from scene to scene as it unfolds” in an attempt to “place the reader inside the conductor’s consciousness and to reveal insights about his personality to be fully developed as the story proceeds” (26–27). In a work of comics journalism, the verbal storyline is consistently dramatized by the accompanying visual narrative. In my analysis of *SAG*, the application of this literary device into the visual medium of the comic will specifically be considered in relation

to the visual dramatization of events in the witness sections, together with elements of comics theory such as *panel-to-panel transitions*, *the gutter*, and *closure*.

As noted above, these literary techniques are borrowed from the genre of fiction. An additional note on the nature of New Journalism should, therefore, be added: the element that differentiates the genre from fiction, and more specifically from realistic fiction – the "journalistic contract" (Hellmann 28). Hellmann states that the nature of the author-reader contract (13) varies between different literary genres according to the motivation of the author. A writer of realistic fiction needs to "convince the reader of plausible motivation, larger forces, or at least an acceptable level of coincidence" (11). The message of this author to his/her reader is that "*All this did not really happen, but it could have*" (ibid, original emphasis). The corresponding statement of the 'fabulist', who wants to convince the reader merely of "the basis of the internal cohesion of his purely imaginary works," reads as follows: "*All this could never happen, so do not blame me if it does not seem real*" (ibid.).

A new journalist, on the other hand, needs to convey a sense of verifiability and truthfulness in order to convey his/her message: "*All this actually did happen, so do not blame me if it does not seem real*" (ibid.). This contract thus enables the reader to identify the text as belonging to the realm of the real world (27–28). According to Hellmann, the author may strengthen this contract in various ways, such as explaining the nature of the work through a 'framing device' such as a foreword or an afterword; describing the materials used; or placing excerpts of verifiable documents within the text (28–29). Furthermore, the author may "in various ways, such as through unusual self-revelations, convince the reader of his honesty and trustworthiness" (29). In *SAG* the journalistic contract is furthermore strengthened by Sacco's attention to detail – both the (identified) people and their surroundings are depicted with a strive for recognisability.

2.2. Reading Comics

Comics theory is a relatively young field within the academia, as is evident from the fact that its most influential, canonical works have been published in roughly the last thirty years: Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art* in 1985, Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* in 1993, and Thierry Groensteen's *System of Comics* in 1999 (transl. 2007). Scholarship on the subgenre of nonfiction comics, into which comics journalism is included, is younger still, but academic interest across different fields has expanded during the past decade. Widely recognized as pioneers within the subgenre of nonfiction comics, Sacco's *Palestine* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus* have both acquired interest in the academia. *Palestine*, as well as Sacco's later publications, have been analyzed out of vantagepoints ranging from philosophy to translation studies and the teaching of international relations. As mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, the medium of comics in general and the genre of comics journalism in specific are inherently subjective by nature, with the cartoonist's individual interpretation expressed both in the drawn lines themselves and in the act of choosing what to draw. The aim of the previous section was to establish a background for analyzing Sacco's work in journalistic terms, through the interplay of subjective and objective journalism, as well as the literary techniques employed by the New Journalists of the 1960s and 1970s.

In this section I will focus on the 'comics' aspect of comics journalism. I will begin by establishing a general theoretical framework of the comics form using the works of McCloud and Groensteen, whose *Understanding Comics* and *The System of Comics*, respectively, are widely acknowledged as canonical within the field. Firstly, I will introduce the basic components of which a comic is constructed, to the extent that is useful for the purposes of this thesis. This will be followed by a description of how the form of the comic is fabricated through the arrangement of different panels and their frames, the spaces between the panels, or the gutters, and the pages themselves, and the role of these different elements in guiding the

reading experience. I would like to note that as McCloud's and Groensteen's works both cover an extensive scope of different aspects of comics, I have chosen to discuss only the ones that are appropriate for my analysis. Thus, for example, the use of colours in comics has been discarded as irrelevant for the analysis of Sacco's black-and-white work, as has the history of the comic form, reaching all the way back to Egyptian hieroglyphs. Regarding McCloud's *Understanding Comics* I would like to add that as this classic piece of comics theory is written in the form of a comic, I will be following the lead of previous scholarship in the practice of quotations. Consequently, quotations will not be presented in full capitals (in *SAG*, capital letters are used for interpersonal dialogue), and sentences spanning over several frames will be connected into a unified whole. This practice will further be extended to Sacco's work, as well as other comics referred to in this thesis.

McCloud begins the dissection of the comic form with an attempt to reach a specific definition of what is being analyzed, one that would include all different types of comics, while at the same time excluding other forms of art. As McCloud notes, a frequently used definition is 'sequential art' (5), a term coined by Will Eisner. However, since McCloud deems this definition insufficient in its failure to exclude the related form of the animated film, an additional element is added: that of juxtaposition (7). While animated films present images of visual art in a sequence, they do that on a temporal level, whereas comics are sequential both in time and in space, since each image in a sequence occupies its own assigned space on a page (ibid.). McCloud's specific definition of a comic is, then, as follows: "Juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response in the viewer" (9). Furthermore, McCloud argues that the comic, typically a combination of written words and visual art, is at the same time *both* literature and art and *neither* – "a language all its own" (17). When applied to the person of the cartoonist as a creator of this 'language all its own,' this definition becomes slightly problematic, since many

contemporary comics or graphic novels are actually collaborative creations. For example, the celebrated *Sandman*-series (1988–1996) is a result of the co-operation between author Neil Gaiman and an army of illustrators, colorists etc, and the French photo-comic-hybrid *The Photographer: Into War-Torn Afghanistan with Doctors Without Borders* (transl. 2009) is a brilliant combination of Didier Lefèvre's photographs of his 1986 trip to Afghanistan and comics artist Emmanuel Guibert's illustrations, with Frédéric Lemercier collaborating as colorist and designer.

Having now provided a definition of comics as a 'language all its own', I will continue by describing the 'vocabulary' of that language, followed by considerations of the 'syntax' and 'semantics' of comics. The first element to be brought under inspection is that of the *icon*. Icons are used in various ways as means of representation. A portrait of a person is a representation of that person, and a picture of a flag (or the flag itself) represents the country that has chosen it as its national symbol. McCloud defines *icon* as "any image used to represent a person, place, thing or idea", and divides different icons into three categories: symbols, "icons of language, science and communication", and pictures (27). Symbols, such as the peace sign or a company logo, are used to "represent concepts, ideas and philosophies", while icons belonging to the second category, including letters of the alphabet and numbers, are used on a more practical level (ibid.), for example to form words or mathematical equations. In contrast to the last one, McCloud argues that in these two categories of "non-pictorial" and abstract icons, "meaning is fixed and absolute", and since they represent "invisible ideas", they can be drawn in a number of ways without the form having any effect on that idea (28). As a side note it might here be added that some degree of fluctuation obviously exists within both categories. One of the symbols used as an example of the first category by McCloud, the swastika, could symbolize either peace or the Nazi ideology, and both letters of the alphabet and numbers can function as symbols with various meanings depending, for example, on the cultural context.

Nonetheless, McCloud's observation of these icons not being designed to resemble their subjects remains. The pictorial icons of the third category, on the other hand, are meant to bear some physical similitude to their subjects and they display great variation in terms of abstraction and iconic content (27–28).

The category of pictures is, obviously, the most relevant for the analysis of comics, as they provide the actual content for the story. According to Groensteen, one of "the principle characteristics" of the comic is anthropocentrism: "The narrative drawing privileges the character, the agent of the action; it successively accedes to each character the level of protagonist" (162). The level of realism or abstraction of, for example, the picture of the face of a character in a comic, is not merely a matter of stylistic preference, as McCloud goes on to demonstrate. Using the phrase "amplification through simplification", McCloud argues that simplifying the facial features to portray only the most essential details brings focus to said features and amplify their meaning to a point where those features come to represent the 'idea' of a face (30–31). A circle containing two dots just above the middle and a straight line just below the middle represents such an idea in its most simple form (if you are not convinced, curve the line slightly upwards from both ends and color the inside of the circle yellow).

According to McCloud, cartoon imagery is also universal: "The more cartoony a face is … the more people it could be said to describe" (31). The opposite ends of this scale are the photograph with its fixed representation reserved for one specific individual and the completely abstracted circle with two dots for 'eyes' and a straight line for 'mouth' mentioned above.[9] The three points between these two extremes on McCloud's five-point scale, simplified for the purpose of demonstration, are the highly realistic portrait that could represent "a few"; the less detailed image with slightly exaggerated features familiar to many from, say, Superman

[9] Well-known contemporary examples of the use of the latter include the popular, darkly humorous web comic *Cyanide and Happiness*, created by Rob DenBleyker, Kris Wilson, Dave McElfatrick, and Matt Melvin and published since 2004, and the even darker work of Icelandic artist Hugleikur Dagsson, whose publications include *Should You Be Laughing at This?* (2006) and *Is This Supposed to Be Funny?* (2007).

comics that could signify “thousands”; and the simplified image containing only the roughest constituents of a face but still clearly depicting a face, rather than a symbol of a face, which could denote “millions” (ibid.).

McCloud further elaborates on the significance of facial imagery by claiming that photographs or realistic drawings translate in our minds to ‘another’ (than me), while in the abstract, cartoony faces we see ourselves (36). He exemplifies this idea with a face-to-face conversation, in which the other’s features are perceived in detail, while the “mind-picture” of one’s own face, although constantly present, remains “a sketchy arrangement” (35–36). The vagueness of our mental images of ourselves are thus the reason for us being able to identify with a drawn face, as long as the image of that face is abstract enough. In accordance with this theoretical standpoint, McCloud draws his narrator-self in his book with reduced, simplified features, since a more realistically illustrated character would attract the reader’s attention at the expense of the informational content transmitted by that character (37). A typical characteristic of both comics and animation films is that even though the characters might be simple in appearance, the backgrounds are often composed in a highly realistic style. McCloud argues the reason for this to reside in the framework presented above: “No one expects audiences to identify with brick walls or landscapes” (42). Instead, the combination of a simplified, relatable cartoon character with a realistic landscape “allows readers to mask themselves in a character and safely enter a sensually stimulating world” (43). In the analysis section, these ideas of the identifiability and relatability of the comics character will be combined with the new journalistic literary device of *composite characterization*, as I attempt to illuminate the process of readerly engagement and devictimization regarding characters who are not individually identified in *SAG*.

Following McCloud’s lead, having now established the vocabulary of comics, the next step is to move on to the grammar of comics, beginning with *closure*. In the traditional

definition of the term as used in literary theory, closure usually denotes the completion of a narrative: “a form of fulfillment [sic] … an ending that will confer meaning on the rest of the narrative” (MacKay 181). In comics, however, closure does not signify the end of the story, but rather the relationships both between adjoining panels and those of a single panel or a series of panels to the overall story. In this sense, the term could also be interpreted as lacking the finality of the traditional definition: the meaning initially fixed on a panel might change when more information is provided by later panels or, for example, when the reader has obtained more background information and revisits the story for a second reading. By McCloud’s definition, closure takes place when the comics reader mentally connects two or more separate images, transforming them into a single, unified idea of the depicted event (66–67).

Although the notion of closure is not unique to comics, the manner in which closure takes place separates the medium from others. For example, in electronic media such as film, closure is offered to the viewer automatically, as the film projector “transform[s] a series of still pictures into a story of continuous motion” (65). In comics, on the other hand, the reader participates in the construction of the event as “a willing and conscious collaborator,” and “closure is the agent of change, time and motion” (ibid.). Groensteen’s definition further elaborates on the idea of “the active cooperation provided by the reader”: “Comics is a genre of reticence. Not only do the silent and immobile images lack the illusionist power of the filmic image, but their connections, far from producing a continuity that mimics reality, offer the reader a story that is full of holes, which appear as gaps in the meaning” (17). The reader is forced to fill these gaps in the story him-/herself through the continuous process of closure, by which s/he “forgets … the fragmented character and discontinuity of the enunciation” (ibid.).

As a connecting device, much of the process of closure takes place in the empty space between the separate panels, the *gutter* (66). McCloud’s example consists of two sequential panels, the former of which depicts a man chasing another with an axe in hand

screaming “NOW YOU **DIE**!!”, whereas the latter portrays the skyline of a moonlit city, with a scream travelling across and beyond the panel (ibid.). Arguably, most readers would interpret the event as the murder of the man who is running away from the man with an axe. However, the ‘how’ of the murder takes place in the mind of the reader, making him/her “an equal partner in crime”, “committing it in your own style” (68). Thus, McCloud states, “To kill a man between panels is to condemn him to a thousand of deaths” (69).

Groensteen points out that the gutter in the meaning of an actual empty space between panels should not be merited too much attention, stating that there is “no point to postulate an implicit void when the illustrator did not make use of one … The gutter is simply the symbolic site of … absence” (112–113). According to Groensteen, while the gutter itself is insignificant, it is “invested with an arthrologic function that can only be deciphered in light of the singular images that it separates and unites” (114), and it functions as a strengthening device of the “*iconic solidarity*” (113) that exists between adjoining panels. Groensteen defines two types of ‘arthrology’, or “conjunction [and] repetition” (22) that take place between images in comics: *restricted arthrology* and *general arthrology*. The latter represents an “elaborated level of integration” of elements that are “translinear or distant”, while the restricted arthrology of the comic is composed by more “elementary relations”, or “sequential syntagms” (ibid.) between elements that are in direct interaction with each other, such as progressive panels and the gutter between them. McCloud distinguishes between six types of transition between panels: moment-to-moment; action-to-action; subject-to-subject; scene-to-scene; aspect-to-aspect; and the non-sequitur (70–72). The axe killer example presented above was one of subject-to-subject transition, in which the images clearly belong to the same scene, but the reader is required to provide the details. Moment-to-moment and action-to-action transitions are the least ambiguous, while the scene-to-scene transition, in which the panels are often distant to each other in time or space, demand the reader to use deduction for his/her interpretation of the

sequence. The aspect-to-aspect transition "bypasses time … and sets a wandering eye on different aspects of a place, idea or mood" (72), whereas the non-sequitur transition lacks coherence between the panels, which also makes it void of iconic solidarity. Taking the abovementioned into account, it may be concluded that the gutter does not merely function as a filler of space on a comic page, but is indeed a key element for developing an understanding of readerly participation in comics.

Panels and their interrelations have already been discussed above, but for a more thorough comprehension of the system of comics, we need to add the frame and its multiple functions. To simplify the matter, the panel is the picture for which the frame provides borders, although the two are sometimes used interchangeably. Besides these two elements, Groensteen uses the terms *hyperframe* and *multiframe* in the construction of his hierarchical spatio-topical system of the comic. The hyperframe carries the single function of operating on a single page, enclosing all the lower-level frames located on that page (30). The multiframe, on the other hand, functions on several levels in a system of "panel proliferation that [is] increasingly inclusive" working its way upwards across the "multistage multiframes" of the strip, the page and the double page, finally enclosing the whole book (ibid.). For the purposes of my thesis, this brief introduction of the higher level of the hierarchy will be sufficient. Therefore, I will continue by presenting the various functions of the simple frame.

Groensteen divides the functions of the frame into six categories: "the function of closure, the separative function, the rhythmic function, the structural function, the expressive function, and the readerly function" (39). The first function, that of *closure*, signifies the closing of the panel upon which it is assigned a specific form and meaning. As Groensteen more eloquently formulates, "To close the panel is to enclose a fragment of space-time belonging to the diegesis, to signify the coherence" (40). Groensteen defines the drawn panel as either functioning as the representation of a mental image or as the translation of an earlier document,

such as a photograph or a drawing. This *prographic material*, or a chosen portion of it, is adapted into the comic through a process of *reframing* (41). According to Groensteen, while the choice of the original frame of the prographic document might be justified by some sort of an advantage, this advantage is "nothing more than the benefit of anteriority" (42), and the original frame can thus be discarded.

The process of reframing is particularly interesting for the analysis of *SAG* because of Sacco's admitted reliance on photographs and other visual material in his work. A clear example of reframing in *SAG* is Sacco's manipulation of a photograph of a victim of the shelling of Sarajevo in 1995 (206), the prographic document for which I have traced back to Reuters photographer Peter Andrews. In the photograph, the blast of a shell has torn open the back of a young man and thrown him towards a street railing over which he hangs, the upper half of his body facing the wall of a building. The photograph is taken from the right-hand side of the victim, with the photographer looking along the street. In Sacco's reframing of the document, the victim is turned around so that his upper body is on the street side of the railing, and the viewing angle is from the left side of the victim. As this is, in my opinion, not simply an act of reframing a part of a pre-existing image, but includes additional manipulation of the content of the image, I propose an additional step to the process described by Groensteen. In this final step, the frame of the prographic document is deconstructed, the portion of the image chosen by the artist is transformed into a mental image, after which this mental image is framed along the same procedural lines as the simple mental image.

The second function of the frame, the *separative function*, signifies "a condition of reading [in which] the panels are physically isolated from each other, or cognitively isolatable [so] that they can be read separately. In this consideration, the panel frame plays an analogous role to that of punctuation marks in language" (Groensteen 43). The third, rhythmic function, denotes the manner in which the succession of frames guides the reading along a certain rhythm,

which “can be developed, nuanced, and recovered by more elaborate rhythmic effects stressed by other ‘instruments’ (parameters), like those of the distribution of word balloons, the opposition of colors, or even the play of the graphic forms” (45). The author of a comic might also use other elements to manipulate this rhythm, such as the size of the panels or, as Banita notes, still (or silent) images, which often carry the effect of “narrative deceleration” (62). The structuring function of the frame is related to the form of the frame, which typically takes a rectangular shape.

Groensteen argues that the rectangular form is favored in comics for two reasons. Firstly, the media in which comics appear, whether newspapers or books, are most often rectangular. Because of this, the page and thus the hyperframe are also rectangular, forcing the panels to “enter into a mimetic rapport with the imposed form … In reproducing the form of the support, the image cooperates with it rather than denying it or confronting it” (46). Secondly, rectangular shapes are simply the easiest ones to arrange into the sequence that forms the classic strip, which by their horizontal alignment facilitate the reading (47). The expressive function of the frame signifies that while the frame and the panel or image it encloses usually operate in collaboration, the frame might “also connote a certain form of irony or denial” (50). Finally, the readerly function embodies the fact that a frame is “always the sign of something to be read … an invitation to stop and scrutinize” (52–53). Groensteen further states that while the panel itself would usually succeed in performing this function on its own, the role of the frame is significant in cases where “a part of the image might appear insignificant … or merges in its immediate environment to the point where this section risks not being seen” (54). Through this function, the frame can thus foreground elements of the image that would otherwise escape the eye of the reader. In my analysis section, I will make use of the functions of closure and rhythm, as well as the readerly function.

I will now continue with an analysis of Joe Sacco's *SAG* using the established frameworks of subjective and objective journalism and comics theory. In my analysis, I will combine the six techniques of New Journalism as described by Hollowell with the visual characteristics of the comics medium derived from the works of McCloud and Groensteen. The objective perspective of journalism will also be taken into consideration, in accordance with Calcutt and Hammond's observation of the subjective and objective as complementary, rather than opposing, forces in journalism. My reason for choosing this particular set of theoretical tools is that while the impact of the legacy of New Journalism on Sacco's work has frequently been noted both by scholars and the author himself, a deeper analysis of this connection remains, in my understanding, unestablished. Besides Chute's identification of comics journalism as "the echt New Journalism" (*Disaster Drawn* 334), the connection between the two genres is often recognized only briefly through the shared characteristic of subjectivity. Aryn Bartley's article "The Hateful Self: Substitution and the Ethics of Representing War" is an exception in that Bartley analyzes Sacco's *SAG* alongside New Journalist Michael Herr's *Dispatches*. Bartley's focus, however, is on the relationship between the war reporter and his subjects as interpreted via Emmanuel Levinas' concept of substitution, excluding any discussion of either New Journalism or the comics medium. Although Bartley's philosophical angle is highly insightful and illuminates the relationship between these journalists and their subjects in an interesting way, the perspective is vastly different from the one I mean to employ.

An array of previous scholarship regarding comics journalism will, however, be utilized in this analysis, in addition to the works on New Journalism and comics theory. Especially valuable for my research is Chute's *Disaster Drawn*, "the first book to represent a substantial historical, formal, and theoretical context for contemporary comics that seek to document histories of war and disaster" (7). Another book on comics journalism important for several parts of my analysis is Worden's *The Comics of Joe Sacco: Journalism in a Visual*

World, a collection of fifteen articles with themes ranging from the subjective-objective dichotomy of journalism to cartography and the teaching of International Relations. Other sources on comics journalism, the visual representation of war in other media, and other relevant themes will be introduced as needed.

The analysis will be divided into two sections. The first section will predominantly focus on the structure of the verbal narration of *SAG*, whereas the second one is principally dedicated to the visual characteristics of the comic. I do, however, stress that as the verbal and visual aspects are deeply interconnected in this genre, this separation is made purely in terms of structure and clarity. The division is thus made based on predominance rather that exclusion, and therefore fluctuation between the two aspects will take place. In the first section I will discuss the different narrative strategies of *SAG*, the various forms that these narratives take and the effect that both form and content convey to the reader. Firstly, I will inspect Sacco's application of the New Journalistic device of full dialogue and its container in the realm of the comic, the word balloon. This will be followed by an analysis of personal narration in the form of interior monologue, and finally I will consider the different points of view used in *SAG* within the context of historical narration. The second section will begin with a presentation and analysis of the different characters and the different roles they take in the comic. Here, the New Journalistic techniques of composite characterization and status details will be analyzed alongside, for example, the concepts of facial iconography and inhabitation derived from comics theory. Finally, the actions of these characters will be considered in connection with the New Journalistic dramatic scene and the functions of the frame. I have allowed for some fluidity between the two sections for the sake of emphasizing the interconnectedness of the themes. Ultimately, I wish to illuminate not only the presence of the new journalistic literary devices in *SAG*, but also how Sacco's application of these devices, together with those of the comics genre, participate in the creation of a readerly experience that brings the reader closer to the subjects.

3. "Hear My Words That I Might Teach You"

The first new journalistic literary device to be introduced to this analysis is full dialogue, which will here be discussed together with the visual container of dialogue in comics, the word balloon. The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate how the inclusion of the actual speech of the alongside the various functions of the word balloon facilitate the familiarization of the characters to the reader. The individual speech characteristics and emotions conveyed both through words and through the form in which those words are presented participate in the individual personalization of the subjects.

The intertwining narrative levels of *SAG* acquire different visual forms. As is typical for the comics medium, direct interpersonal dialogue is presented within word balloons, within which speech appears in upper-case letters. According to McCloud, the word balloon is "the most widely-used, most complex and most versatile of comics' many synaesthetic icons", the multiple variations of which indicate the struggle of comics artists "to depict **sound** in a strictly **visual medium**" (134, original emphasis). McCloud's visual examples of the different shapes of the word balloon include the archetypal, smooth ellipsis with an appendix pointing at the person to whom the words are accredited; the jagged, irregularly outlined shape signifying a loud noise; and the ellipsis dripping with icicles, generally recognized as an indicator of contempt or hostility (ibid.). These examples illuminate the potential of the word balloon to express additional information, such as emotion or volume, on the content it encloses without occupying any additional space. Also, the verbal content itself might further be visually manipulated, as in the example of the loud noise, whereby the jagged edges and the boldening of the text inside the balloon establish a double emphasis on the loudness of the speech event: "**TIMBER!**" (ibid, original emphasis). Occasionally, the verbal elements are completely absent, and the word balloon adds information or emphasis explicitly to the visual image it accompanies through the employment of various non-verbal symbols. For example, a single

question mark within a word balloon might symbolize the bewilderment of a character, and a series of Z:s emphasize the fact that a character is asleep (McCloud 134). A defining feature of the word balloon is, as Groensteen remarks, its subordinate status within the comics page in relation to its *host panel* – the balloon is void of meaning without a representation of its source (68–69).

For the most part, the word balloons used in *SAG* represent the archetypal smooth ellipsis, and cartoony non-verbal elements are largely absent. In several instances, however, both the shape of the balloon and the written utterance within it are manipulated for emphasis or representation of emotion. For example, when Joe asks two local girls whether he could bring them something from Sarajevo on his return, they exclaim in unison: "**JEANS!**" (56). The girls' enthusiasm, visible in their expressions in the host panel, is further enhanced by the employment of a large, irregularly-shaped word balloon crossing the borders of the panel and boldened letters that fill the balloon from side to side. In this example, the two speakers are each assigned their own appendix of the balloon. Here, the form of the word balloon facilitates the reader's recognition of the emotion of the speakers without any textual reference. Furthermore, since the identity of the speakers is only indicated by the appendices of the word balloon, the reader is required to recognize them based on their visual appearance – to be familiar enough with the characters to be able to differentiate them from all others. Another example representing multiple speakers is the scene where captured Bosnian men fleeing Srebrenica are forced to swear allegiance to their capturers: "**WE ARE SERB SOLDIERS! WE ARE THE SERB ARMY!**" (200). Here, the number of speakers is undefined, and the multiplicity of voices is illustrated with the use of several appendices pointing to the group in general.

The opposite speech volume and its significance can also be emphasized with the word balloon, as in the instance when Sacco and his Goražd an friends learn that the peace negotiations in Dayton have finally reached a conclusion. The single-word expression "Peace",

whispered by Edin (209), is placed in the center of the balloon, with empty space surrounding it from all sides. Besides emphasizing the quiet volume in which the word is spoken, the empty space surrounding the word finds further meaning from the context of the pages that follow. After initial disbelief and subsequent celebration, the predominant emotion is the bewilderment expressed by Dalila: “It’s peace and I don’t know how to behave” (211). Some days later, the hollowness of the word itself becomes more evident, as the Goraždans have had time to absorb the minutiae of the peace agreement, by which Bosnia was divided into two entities: the Serb-controlled territory and the Muslim-Croat federation, leaving Goražde pocketed within Serb territory (214–215). The locals express their skepticism over whether the peace will last: “This is just a pause in the war,” and “I’m worried about raising children here. I’m afraid events might repeat themselves” (214).

In Sacco’s follow-up on his Goraždan friends, presented as the epilogue of the book, the word ‘peace’ still resonates. Throughout the book, the reader has been presented with everyday realities of war – the horror, the boredom, the dreams, the hope for peace. When finally a reality, the offerings of the much-anticipated peace do not quite live up to the expectations. For example, earlier in the story a young woman, Amra, has expressed her boredom and frustration with Goražde: “**I hate this little fucking town**. It’s really boring at home. So I go out and it’s really boring here, too” (72–73, original emphasis). However, when she at long last is free to travel to Sarajevo, she feels anxious around the ‘cool’ Sarajevans, who are depicted looking at the refugees, or the “bumpkins from cow towns” (224–225) with condescending expressions on their faces. Her earlier aggressive statement is mirrored by a new one: “I miss Goražde. I miss my friends” (226). Even Edin’s friend Riki, whose spontaneous karaoke performances and enthusiasm towards American pop culture have lightened the mood throughout the comic, is in the epilogue drawn seated quietly, with a blank expression on his face (227). While Edin and Riki are at the end of the comic described as being busy finishing

their university studies, the effect of the almost four-year long gap in normal life is visible in both of their expressions.

Edin and Riki are the most often recurring characters in *SAG*, and as relatively fluent English speakers serve as good examples for the further analysis of the use of full dialogue in the comic. In her analysis on the role of interpreters, translators and translations in Sacco's work, Brigid Maher discusses the process of mediation – not only is the content of an interview first mediated via the interpreter or translator to the comics artist, but the latter further needs to translate the interaction from oral to written form through a selection process, which reshapes the content of the discourse "to fit into the spatial and rhythmic constraints of the word balloon" (226). Most of the dialogue in *SAG* is translated for Sacco on site by Edin, resulting in an understandably more restricted and less nuanced content, but the speech of Edin's friend Riki is worth noting in this context.

A central character to the story, Riki's eagerness to develop his English skills and his admiration of American culture form one of the recurring themes of the comic. On one hand, his speech is often characterized by highly literary, even archaic formulations, which provide a source of amusement for his friends even in more grave contexts: "It is very horrible, what has befallen us. The malefactors must be sent to The Hague to stand trial for war crimes" (*SAG* 25). On the other hand, more colloquial phrases also offer ample source for excitement. Both Edin and Riki carry notebooks for collecting interesting English phrases, such as "It's nothing to write home about" and "You're full of shit", for which Sacco-the-character is required to provide detailed descriptions: "And there I was, with the genuine article pouring out of my mouth, and Riki squeezed me for every drop of usage and conjugation he could" (100). These informal interactions between Sacco and his subjects, as well as the inclusion of their quirks and characteristics contribute to the repersonalization of the Goražd ans, especially so with

recurring characters such as Edin and Riki,who are given sufficient space in the story to be portrayed as complex characters with individual personalities.

When analyzing the presentation of full dialogue in comics, the restricted space of the word balloon should also be taken into consideration. Maher observes that "[i]t is easy to forget that dialogue presented in comics journalism … is not necessarily reported verbatim, and even when it is, the author has performed a process of selection and presentation" (226). Maher's statement echoes the one presented earlier by Hollowell regarding authorial selection in the representation of full dialogue in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. As was demonstrated above with the example of the word 'peace', careful choices of the content of the word balloon might resonate through large portions of the comic. For example, although Riki's numerous, spontaneous song performances in *SAG*, accompanied within the word balloon with note lines and musical symbols, serve as a lightener of the rather gloomy overall mood of the comic, Sacco's choice to depict him on at least five separate occasions performing the Eagles' rock ballad "Hotel California" implies the particular significance of this song and its lyrics. Jared Gardner notes the relation between the song's line "You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave" and the frozen time of Goražde under siege (25).

Curiously, as Gardner further observes, at the end of the story Sacco expresses a sort of desire to preserve this frozenness, "to hold his subjects in time and place" (29), which echoes another line of the song: "Any time of year, you can find it here". The last page of the main story shows Sacco on a convoy out of the town, contemplating: "I hoped Riki would get out of there, too, one day … and I hoped he'd be there when I got back … I hoped he could go … but I wanted to hold him there" (*SAG* 221). Gardner argues this scene to convey both "the obverse of the conventional journalists' need to make his subjects move … towards a resolution in time for the evening news", and Sacco's ability to speak for those outside the normal, 'networked' time, to "remind us that time measured by CNN or *Time* is not absolute or

universal" (29–30). Riki's repertoire is by no means restricted to this one song, but a whole soundtrack of classic American rock songs plays in the background of the reading experience (provided that the reader recognizes the fragments presented in the word balloons). In fact, the melancholy nature of Saccos's chosen soundtrack would easily provide material for a separate, in-depth analysis. For the purposes of this thesis, suffice it to mention that Bruce Springsteen's "Born in the U.S.A", Simon and Garfunkel's "Sound of Silence", and Rolling Stones' "Dead Flowers", however joyfully performed, all carry connotations of death and destruction, and thus play their own part in setting the mood for the comic.

Another interesting facet of the impact of recording dialogue in full is that it enables the inclusion of speech characteristics such as hesitation markers, as well as utterances for which the content lacks verification. While this aspect is not mentioned in Hollowell's discussion of the literary device, I would argue that it is worth noting as a highlighter of the elements of uncertainty that often accompany individual war experiences. Not being certain about the fate of family members, friends, or strangers encountered during the war, is a recurring theme in *SAG*. One example features Edin recounting the fate of seven captured Serb soldiers he encountered while on guard duty outside Goražde, one of whom revealed to him that his house had been burned down by his own Serb neighbors: "Some time later they were moved to Goražde. They were executed. *For sure*" (*SAG* 87, emphasis added). This example illustrates both the role that chance might play in gaining knowledge of details of one's own experience (the identification of the neighbors), as well as the fact that the execution of the captives is based on an assumption, albeit a justifiable one. Another scene presents two men who have escaped the massacre of Srebrenica, one of whom was separated from his brother during his flight, and the other stating: "My father was taken from the convoy in Bratunac. I don't know what's happened to him" (204). The context of the rest of the chapter provides definitive

information of what happened to a large number of men in and around Srebrenica: “All told, in the ambushes and executions, more than 7000 Muslim men were killed” (203).

With reference to Sacco’s *The Fixer,* Chute suggests that the contingency of not knowing actually becomes a central subject, which brings “focus on the problematic of knowing and not knowing that is so essential to the transmission of traumatic history” (*Disaster Drawn* 223). The scenes that present not-knowing add to Sacco’s earlier presented idea of the *essential truth* of the war experience through a mixture of the collective and the personal – the collective, and personal, subjective truth is that the specific persons mentioned in the scene might or might not have killed, and that the lack of verification by no means diminishes the loss of a loved one. Additionally, these two assumed victims of the Srebrenica massacre are, through a process of extension, given individual identities, which facilitates the individualization of the nameless victims depicted in the mass graves.[10]

A final example of the word balloon illustrates its ability to function as an enabler for the inclusion of unverified rumor in a way that does not impact the trustworthiness of the journalist. In one of the scenes featuring Alija Begovic, a doctor of the local hospital who is generally portrayed as a relatively objective ‘expert witness’, the doctor mentions a rumor of an exceptionally atrocious act of violence. Right before Sacco departs Dr. Alija Begovic’s office after they viewing of the video of the shelling victims at the hospital, Dr. Begovic breaks from his former professional detachment to comment on the ‘neutrality’ of the United Nations: “Neutral in what? In a slaughter of lambs by the wolves? I simply can’t believe such people exist – someone who would force a grandfather to eat the liver of his grandson” (*SAG* 125). Sacco comments on this in interior monologue: “I wasn’t sure what he was referring to, and I

[10] Dzenana Halimovic’s project of collecting photographs and additional information of the victims of the Srebrenica massacre provides a harrowing example of devictimization and repersonalization on a significantly larger scale. To the date, her collection includes the photographs of roughly 2400 victims, with ages ranging from 14 years upwards. In addition, almost 6000 more are given name, date of birth, and age at the time of death or disappearance, accompanied by an empty silhouette. The total number of named victims is 8373. The collection is available online at www.rferl.org/a/27114531.html#.

didn't ask. Maybe it was one of those apocryphal stories going around about the enemy … or maybe not. I let the doctor gather his thoughts, and I went away to dissipate my own" (ibid.). This short exchange serves an example of the mixture of Sacco's objective detachment observed by Singer (67) regarding the doctor's accusation against both the UN and the Serbs, and his subjective expression of uncertainty and emotional response.

Interestingly, this specific atrocity was also referred to by Judge Fouad Riad in a November 1995 ICTY press release concerning the indictment against Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić and General Ratko Mladić for atrocities committed at Srebrenica: "The evidence tendered by the Prosecutor describes scenes of unimaginable savagery: thousands of men executed and buried in mass graves, hundreds of men buried alive, men and women mutilated and slaughtered, children killed before their mothers' eyes, a grandfather forced to eat the liver of his own grandson. These are truly scenes from hell, written on the darkest pages of human history" ("Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić …"). The lack of verification for the story *at the time* of the interview is definitely a factor here – the information presented on the personal level is, in Sacco's work, consistently based on eyewitness interviews, because of the need for visual details noted earlier. The eventual verification of the rumor by an official authority could be seen as justification for Sacco's inclusion of the doctor's comment in the final work, a reason for this particular scene being chosen to be represented during the selection process mentioned by Maher.

Similarly, in his afternote to *SAG*, Sacco comments on his choice to include the Srebrenica refugees' description of the effects of an incapacitating combat gas used by the Serbs, even though the presence of such an element remained unverified at the time of the interviews, which were left "lazy" as a result (*SAG*, final page). Sacco's skepticism was altered after the publication in 1998 of a Human Rights Watch report, *Chemical Warfare in Bosnia? The Strange Experiences of the Srebrenica Survivors*, in which HRW, based on several witness

accounts, concludes the use of a chemical agent a factor that "'cannot be ruled out' though 'conclusive evidence remains elusive'" (qtd. in Sacco, ibid.). Furthermore, Sacco's reluctance to search verification for the rumor at the time of his interview with the doctor should be noted: "I didn't ask" (ibid.). One reason for this reluctance could be the 'unimaginable' nature of this exceptionally sadistic atrocity, that it is out of reach for Sacco's informed imagination, even if the information could somehow be gained. On a related note, Brigid Maher mentions that Sacco himself has commented on the traumatic quality of the drawing process, in which he needs to *inhabit* every person he draws to be able to depict the details of, for examples, body postures (233–234). The process of *inhabitation* is a key element in Chute's in-depth analysis of Sacco's and other artists' documentary comics (*Disaster Drawn* 263), and it will be returned to in the second analysis chapter.

Groensteen differentiates between the *verbal* and the *written* functions of text in a comic, stating that the verbal functions of dramatization and realism (127) bring "speech in comics … closer to speech in the cinema than in the literary text" (128). The above section focused on these verbal functions, whereas the following two sections will concentrate on the two levels of written narrative – the personal and the historical. Word balloons containing dialogue is accompanied in *SAG* by Sacco's first-person narrative, or *interior monologue* mentioned in the previous example. Encyclopedia Britannica defines this term as a "… narrative technique that exhibits Interior monologue appears in *SAG* within roughly rectangular boxes of varying shapes and sizes, with regular lettering in contrast to the upper-case letters used within the word balloons. of thought and emotion" ("Interior monologue"). As presented in the theory section of this thesis, Hollowell's definition of this literary technique as a new journalistic device suggests that "[e]vents are reported *as if* a subject were thinking them rather than through the direct quotations of the speaker" (29, original emphasis). Interior monologue appears in *SAG* within roughly rectangular boxes of varying shapes and sizes, with regular lettering in

contrast to the upper-case letters used within the word balloons. In contrast to Hollowell's example derived from Talese's *The Kingdom and the Power*, in which this device is used for third-person narration, *SAG* employs interior monologue in first-person narration, both in introducing Sacco's own thoughts and attitudes and those of his subjects in the witness sections. While the narrative in the latter is presented within quotation marks, a practice dismissed by Talese in Hollowell's example (29), the function of revealing the subject's inner sentiments remains the same, especially since Sacco's cartoon self is completely absent from these witness sequences and his questions do not therefore interrupt the story in the sense that Talese criticizes (ibid.).

To clarify the similarity of Talese's and Sacco's narratives with regard to this specific characteristic, I would like to emphasize that both display the end product of an interview, in which the journalist has, obviously, been attendant, and the outcomes of these interviews are thus constructed by the journalists' desire to gain knowledge of the interviewee's inner thoughts and emotions at the time of the event. Although Sacco's witness sections are presented as monologues depicting past events, it is evident that the content is guided by Sacco and the questions he poses in the present of the comic. Since the witness testimonies share the same basic qualities with Sacco's personal narrative on the written aspects, the emphasis of this section will be on the latter, while the nuances of the former will be more thoroughly examined alongside the analysis visual narrative in later sections.

Sacco's personal narrative, presented as interior monologue, expresses Joe's contributions to conversations within a panel whenever he is not present in that panel, or is occupied with something other than talking; a narrative of the ongoing events in the space and time of Goražde in the present; and Sacco's private thoughts and attitudes. Occasionally, these private thoughts highlight Sacco's earlier mentioned caution regarding his subjects in order not to "alienate his sources" (Singer 68). For example, when his hosts ask him about American

attitudes towards the war, Sacco is clearly avoiding any controversial comment: "–Is our fight just? –Yes, I said, your fight is just. –Do they know about Goražde in America? –Yes, I lied" (*SAG* 52–53). The fact that Sacco lies to his subjects is again presented in past tense, from the present of the time of writing, making the information unavailable to the people in the present of the comic. This technique also allows for the expression of unpleasant emotions evoked by his subjects. Close to the end of the comic, in a short chapter titled "America Man", Sacco is confronted by a local man, F, who questions his motives of coming to Goražde: "America man thinks Bosnia man primitive. Journalist … why you come? Money? I think … Srebrenica. I become angry … You don't write for Srebrenica" (*SAG* 191–192). Sacco, visibly shaken, huddles in the corner, thinking: "I wanted out, out of there…I wanted to put a hundred thousand miles between me and Bosnia, between me and these horrible, disgusting people and their fucking wars and pathetic prospects …" (192). The final panel on the page is a bleed receding to complete darkness into which Sacco walks with his shoulders hunched, the gloominess of the background reflecting the distress of the character.

As is evident from the structure described above, Sacco's roles in the narrative are not restricted to those of the character and the narrator. Lan Dong defines these multiple roles as those of "author, artist, narrator, and journalist" (41), of which the differentiation between the last two is defined as follows: "Sacco is a first-person narrator who befriends local residents and participates in social gatherings; at the same time, he is also a journalist who interviews people, observes their lives, and functions as a conduit to introduce to the reader multiple testimonies about the war" (41–42). This stylistic choice resembles that of a dramatized or reenacted documentary in the medium of the film. In the witness sections the role of the artist becomes especially heightened in the absence of the other two 'visible' roles – the role of the author, while encompassing all the others, functions as a background force rather than a separate role. Chute highlights the importance of the role of the artist and the process of

drawing with an emphasis on the witness sections: "[Sacco] joins his own 'visual voice' to the expression of spoken testimony on the page, working responsively with the substance of language to also provide visual, pictorial substance" (*Disaster Drawn* 206). He thus becomes present in the scene even when his character or narration is absent through his "haptic presence" as the visual creator of the scene (ibid.). By drawing the traumatic experiences of the witnesses alongside their verbal testimony, Sacco participates in "an act of inhabiting their memories and pasts in order to acknowledge and particularize them" (ibid.).

The temporal aspects of the different levels of narration might require some further clarification before proceeding. The earlier discussed word balloons introduce speech which takes place in the present of the frame or context, although the utterance might refer to past events. Riki's statement, "It is very horrible what has befallen us …" (*SAG* 25), is clearly connected to the general present of the comic in that the utterance is accompanied with a close-up of his face, and the larger context shows him dining at a restaurant together with Sacco and Edin. Among the recurring characters of *SAG*, Riki represents something of an anomaly in that he persistently averts Sacco's interest in the details of his personal war experience. His past is thereupon hidden from the reader, apart from the general fact that, as a soldier, he has previously fought in Sarajevo and then walked through Serb lines to Goražde (26). Sacco laments upon this loss of a soldier's perspective: "As well as I got to know Riki, and as many times as I asked, he remained reticent about his experiences in combat. That day we first met, he told me as much as he ever would…" (27). The image accompanying this comment depicts Sacco and Riki standing side by side, the latter with a forlorn look on his face, saying: "I have seen many horrible things. They have artillery, tanks, a lot of weapons. We have nothing. I saw many people killed, parts of people. Horrible things" (ibid.). In the following panel, Riki bursts out singing Simon and Garfunkel's "Cecilia": "Making love in the afternoon with Cecelia up in my bedroom … **WOO**" (ibid, original emphasis), indicating his unwillingness to continue the

discussion. Riki's and other subjects' refusal to share their stories will be returned to later in the analysis. The above example, however, also serves to illustrate the temporal aspect of interior monologue in *SAG* – Riki's speech is situated in the present – "We *have* nothing" –, whereas Sacco's lamentation takes the past tense: "I *asked* … he *told* me as much as he ever *would*". The interior monologue of the witness sections also takes the past tense, but in contrast to these, the past tense of Sacco's personal narrative is not derived from the present of the comic, but from the present of his writing of the comic.

Regarding the temporal aspects of the witness sections[11] in Sacco's works, Chute observes that "[c]omics grammar exhibits the legibility of double narration – and stages disjuncts between presence and absence and between word and image – in order to pressure linearity, causality, and sequence: to express the simultaneity of traumatic temporality, and the doubled view of the witness as inhabiting the present and the past" (*Disaster Drawn* 206). Besides emphasizing the effect of past trauma on the present, the idea of double narration can be extended to encompass the reason for the presentation of Sacco's cartoon self in the present of the panel, while Sacco's narrator-voice echoes into the panel from the present of the writing. This temporal filtering of Sacco's interior monologue provides him the relative omniscience needed for the contextualization of the story, without which he would not, for example, have known that Riki was never going to reveal his experiences to him.

Interestingly, in the follow-up to *SAG*, *The Fixer*, Sacco abdicates this relative omniscience, arguably for the sake of emphasizing the fluctuating trustworthiness of his 'fixer', Neven, a former fighter for one of the notorious Bosnian warlords, Celo. The comic ends on a note of uncertainty, as Sacco questions one of Neven's acquaintances on the stories he has recovered: "He remembers Neven as a bit of a blowhard. He tells me one or two stories about Neven that take me aback…that make me feel like I didn't know the half of what Neven was

[11] The term 'witness section' is used in this thesis to refer to sections of Sacco's comics that take place in the past. The protagonist of these sections is always one of the interviewees.

about … that I'd barely traced the edges of his secrets" (*The Fixer* 105). Thus, in *The Fixer*, even more so than in *SAG*, Sacco addresses the ultimate incompleteness of the reporting process. As Hartsock notes regarding literary journalism, "heightened subjectivity could only conclude with a report that implicitly acknowledges its epistemological limitations: subjectivity by definition cannot be omniscient … the more subjectivity is acknowledged … the more there must be a portrait of a contingent or indeterminate world" (247). As was argued earlier regarding uncertainty markers and rumors expressed verbally in full dialogue, Sacco does not attempt to visually depict what is not verifiable. His reliance on either his own observations or those derived from other primary sources, paired with the subjective focus of the interviews that produce the fuel for his informed imagination, matches Hellmann's definition of New Journalism as "[pointing] outward toward the actual world without ever deviating from observations of that world except in forms – such as authorial speculation or fantasy – which are immediately obvious as such to the reader" (27).

Sacco's abovementioned admittance of the uncertainty of gaining information and his discomfort with certain individuals can be seen as an example of the 'self-revelatory' aspect of his strengthening of the journalistic contract with the reader (Hellmann 29). Also, as is characteristic of all his work, Sacco on several occasions highlights his privileged position as a foreign journalist vis-à-vis that of the locals in terms of, for example, freedom of movement: "In my world there were certain privileges. I was a guest of the Bosnian war. I could get out of Goražde gratis. No one ever asked me for money or a limb" (*SAG* 130). For the Goraždans, the only means to get out of the town would have been either U.N. evacuation, provided infrequently for those with critical injuries or an overpriced helicopter ride (128–130).

More generally speaking, the idea of self-revelation is encompassed by the author's continuous presence in the story as a focalizer and a guide for the reader. At the very beginning of the comic Sacco addresses the reader directly, commenting on the overwhelming

amount of information flooding the journalists arriving to Goražde after the town's almost complete isolation under the siege: "The hunger? Awful! The prices and fortunes wiped out? Hoo boy! The shells coming in? You wouldn't believe it! (Maybe you won't when I get to it.)" (*SAG* 6). Besides foreshadowing some of the themes to be covered later in the comic, this passage also functions as a personal invitation for the reader to accompany Sacco on his journey to Goražde. The temporal levels of the comic thus increase by one more, that of the present of the reading. In effect, Sacco reaches from the present of the writing to the present of the reading, drawing the reader with him to the present of the comic, from which position we come to witness events situated in the past of the comic.

The third narrative level in *SAG* is historical narration, which presents 'official', generally accepted facts about the war and its circumstances. The bigger picture of the historical narration provides context and authenticity for the personal dialogue and narratives. The New Journalistic literary device, *point of view*, is not directly applicable to this section of my analysis, because in my opinion Hollowell's description of this device is quite similar with that of *interior monologue*: "the portrayal of character as if the reader understood the person's mental processes" (28), which is used by the author to transmit the character's background and attitudes. Instead, the idea will here be employed to highlight the significance of the historical point of view in *SAG*, both in the visual and the literary sense, as a device that foregrounds the individual characters. On one hand, the historical aspect offers crucial information for the reader to contextualize the scenes presented and to understand the individual stories as fragments within the larger, multifaceted, and by nature fragmented narrative of the war. On the other hand, the reader is lead to question the nature of impersonal official reports and statements in relation to the individual narratives.

As we recall, Sacco's quest is for the 'essential truth', a truth firmly grounded in facts but presented through the individual experiences of his subjects. The historical narrative

is based on background information and ‘official’ facts of the war, including quotations of key figures, such as politicians, UN officials, and military leaders. Within chapters taking place in the present of the comic, the historical merges with Sacco’s personal narration, emphasizing his dual role as both an objective journalist who presents facts, and a subjective journalist who attempts to shed light on the individual fates hidden behind the official statements. Historical narration also accompanies and contextualizes the witness sections, from which it was earlier concluded that Sacco is absent, both as a character and as a narrator. In these sections, the historical narration is visually differentiated from the personal narration. Sequences presenting the former open with a larger capital letter placed within a small square, and the shape of the text box is strictly rectangular. Similarly to the other levels, here too a quotation or a part of a quotation is placed within a word balloon when the person quoted is directly portrayed in the panel.

The journalistic contract of this narrative level is strengthened through verification by an extensive bibliography at the end of the book, in which Sacco lists the background material he has used and explains which aspects of information they apply to. The overall significance and the contextual function of this material is commented on in the bibliography: “I never intended this book to be a comprehensive overview of the break-up of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia. However, I found it necessary to provide some context in order to tell the story of Goražde. I leaned heavily on a number of books for background information” (*SAG* 228). Additional validation of Sacco’s work specifically as a journalistic piece is given in the introduction by fellow journalist Christopher Hitchens, who praises Sacco for his “punctilious observation” and his “encapsulation” of the “microcosm of Goražde”, placed within an objective historical and geographical context (*SAG* “Introduction”).

The multifaceted nature of the narrative structure in *SAG* contributes to revealing the interplay between subjective and objective journalism in Sacco’s work. As an example, Lan

Dong uses a scene which demonstrates the devastation of a local school in Goražde and the overall impact that the war has had on the children's education. The page opens with a bleed[12] of the ruined building, which is followed by two panels containing segments of a schoolgirl's account of her educational experiences. The last panel portrays Sacco walking away with three young boys trailing behind him, begging for pencils (*SAG*, 97). These panels are all accompanied with boxes of narration. According to Dong, the interview and Sacco's own observations here represent "subjective truth", and the physical state of the school and the information about the irregularity of the school hours provide the "objective facts" (Dong 44). I would, however, like to suggest here a slightly more complex relationship between the subjective and the objective. The 'objective' information about the school hours is gained through the 'subjective' testimony of the girl, and while the ruin of the school is certainly an objective fact that could be verified by anyone walking by, it is displayed visually through a process of drawing, which has already been argued to ultimately be an inherently subjective act (for example, Sacco, *Journalism* xi). Furthermore, the text accompanying the image is presented as personal narration, indicating that Sacco himself has observed the building on site. This adheres to Calcutt and Hammond's observation presented earlier in the theory section, that "[o]bjectivity arises from the collective application of subjectivity in the contentious process of producing mental objects – knowledge – designed to capture that material object – the external world – which we subjects have previously made" (19).

The facts that the reader learns from the scene presented above are verifiable and hence in accordance with objective ideals of reporting, even though the methods used to collect these facts, as well as the format in which they are exhibited, are characterized by subjectivity. This scene also functions as an interesting example of the formal difference between the

[12] A "bleed" is a panel which is not constricted by a frame, but continues to the edges of the page and into the gutter. According to McCloud, the function of the bleed is, that "[t]ime is no longer contained by the familiar icon of the closed panel, but instead hemorrhages and escapes into timeless space" (103).

personal and the historical verbal narration. The school building is described as having been "gutted"; it is noted that Goražde is "jammed with people"; and the children "scrounge" for school supplies (*SAG*, 97). These words are both informal and emotionally laden, in contrast with the formal, detached style of the historical narration. The words also resonate toward other scenes in the comic, for example with 'gutted' pointing to the violent impact of the shelling on the inhabitants of the town. In the chapter "Total War", Dr Alija Begovic commentates on video footage recorded in the hospital during and after the shelling. One of the panels shows a severely wounded two-year-old girl, whose fate is described in a cool and clinical manner: "She was hit by an anti-aircraft cannon. She had prolapsed intestines – they were spilling out … She died one hour later" (*SAG* 122). Although the building is depicted in the present of the story and the girl in the past, they share the fate of being violently destroyed by the war.

Several elements in *SAG*, such as Riki' s singing performances, the teenage girls' enthusiasm over the prospect of attaining new jeans, and some of the schoolchildren's initial excitement of the destruction of the school, familiarize the characters and the setting of the comic for the (Western) reader, while simultaneously situating these details within the larger historical reality of the war. One such example is Sacco's first evening in Goražde, during which he meets Edin and enjoys some local moonshine, pizza, and dancing with the locals – "just a bunch of drinks and decibels in Bumfuck, the Balkans" (*SAG*, 9). From the prologue to the comic, we have previously learned that a cease-fire allowing regular U.N. convoys into the town with food and supplies (as well as journalists) has very recently taken place, in effect ending the siege of over three years (3). The result of NATO's bombing campaign against the Serbian forces surrounding the town, the cease-fire also brought hope after a summer overshadowed with fear of Goražde sharing the fate of the two other eastern enclaves, Zepa and Srebrenica, which were overrun by Serb forces earlier in the summer (2–3). For a Western reader with no firsthand experience of war, the otherwise familiar scene of the party is here

fueled by something unfamiliar – the overwhelming relief of survival: "… they partied like the resurrected … not like there was no tomorrow, but because there was a tomorrow … they'd been so desperate for so long, and, apparently, just weeks ago, so **doomed** …" (ibid, original emphasis).

As observed by Chute: "In *Goražde* … Sacco's work frames itself around producing a concrete picture of the other through capturing the rhythms and details of both ordinary and extraordinary experience" (*Disaster Drawn* 216). In the scene where the hostess of the evening, Nina, is serving homemade pizza to her guests, the ordinary is visually and textually embedded both into the extraordinariness of her individual war experience and the historical context (*SAG*, 10). The scene is constructed of three bleed panels. The image of Nina handing out plates of pizza in the present of the comic is foregrounded and placed in the middle of the page, and from the bleed several hands emerge to grab the plates. In the background two smaller bleeds fuse into one another, one echoing the images of the U.N. convoy from the prologue, and the other a winter scene depicting Nina and some others on their dangerous journey to the Grebak base near the town of Trnovo, from which the Goraždans retrieved supplies during the beginning of the siege.[13] Sacco's personal narrative clarifies the connection between these bleeds: "Essential ingredients – oil and flour – courtesy of the U.N. convoys! Trucks! An easier way to bring food to the table, Nina could tell you, than humping it yourself through enemy lines and over winter mountains … which she'd done five times … Her pop had frozen to death up there on that same trail … lots of folks did!" (ibid.). This scene functions both as an example of contextualization of the individual with the historical and the "doubled view of the witness as inhabiting the present and the past" (Chute, *Disaster Drawn* 206).

[13]Silber and Little: "For the first fifteen months of the war, Bosnian troops – and thousands of civilians – had been able to move in and out of the town by walking, over the mountains, under cover of darkness, through Serb lines … Soldiers and civilians carried food, medical supplies, small arms and ammunition along this route and, though the risk was great, kept the enclave alive (325). This route was cut in the summer of 1993, when Serbian forces overtook the town of Trnovo (334). GoogleMaps suggests the length of a one-way journey to be 47,2 km, although this approximate does not directly apply to traveling by foot.

However, I would argue that the scene also carries a further function of devictimization and humanization. The superimposition on the page of the ‘ordinary’ image of Nina in the present over the images representing the historical context and the ‘extraordinary’ event of war in Nina’s personal past implies that while affected by both, she is not defined by either of the latter. As Tristram Walker remarks, even though war and violence became “part of the fabric of th[e] everyday existence” of, among others, the Bosnian people, “the reoccurrence of atrocities throughout the war does not diminish their standing as extraordinary events” (71). Sacco’s portrayal of the Goražd ans through the lens of the ordinary, partaking in scenes that are familiar to the reader highlights them as individuals who have experienced extraordinary things, in contrast to the usual news imagery in which people in war zones are often reduced to their victimhood. Walker emphasizes the fact that the victim imagery of the Bosnian War was available to readers and television viewers, as the war was “displayed in full color on the television news of the early 1990s. [While the] roots of the conflict may be obscured by propaganda and misunderstanding … the violent terror of the wars was readily accessible by audiences across the world. Sacco asks us to see beyond the wounds and to see people instead” (78–79). The victim imagery of the mainstream media and Sacco’s counter for that will be further discussed in the second analysis chapter.

According to David Campbell, historical, non-fictional narratives of the Bosnian War fall roughly into two predominant categories: “civil war” and “international conflict”, into which elements such as “ethnicity, historical hatred, aggressive nationalism, religious ideologies, political and economic failures, and genocide … are mobilized in the respective narratives to support their overall explanation” (267). Campbell criticizes the illusion of objectivity in its positivist sense (279) regarding these historical accounts: “even if they think of themselves as being objectivist enterprises [they] manifest the unavoidable perspectivism of political representations” (280). This statement echoes that of Hellmann regarding the

'disguised' versus 'admitted' perspectivity of news reporting (4), of which the latter, characteristic of new journalism, "provides the most effective means of dramatizing the complexities and ambiguities of experience – the dynamic and fluid wholeness of an event" (18).

On a similar note, Campbell offers praise to narratives of the Bosnian War that aim for a "pluralization of perspectives" – "only through the clash of competing narratives are we likely to assemble justifiable knowledge" (281). One of these narratives is Silber and Little's *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* which, while following the common central narrative of the Serbs as the primary aggressors (277), offers a "rich reportage of the complexity of the Yugoslav conflicts" (276). Silber and Little define the aim of their narrative as follows: "One of the central themes of our book is that under Milosevic's stewardship, the Serbs were, from the beginning of Yugoslavia's disintegration, the key secessionists. This is not to say that Milosevic was uniquely malign or solely guilty. The foot soldiers of Yugoslavia's march to war were legion and were drawn from all the nationalities in the country" (26). *Death of a Nation* and the accompanying television documentary of the same name are listed in Sacco's bibliography to *SAG* as his primary material for "the politics of the disintegration of Yugoslavia" (*SAG* bibliography), and while Sacco has chosen to primarily focus on the stories of the Bosnian Muslims of Goražde, *SAG* also aims for a pluralization of perspectives to a certain extent.

In *SAG*, a short chapter aptly titled "The Serbs" provides an additional perspective to the multifaceted nature of the war experience of Goražde. It addresses the problematics of labelling one group of people as 'aggressors' and another group as 'victims'. This simplified division commonly guides our understanding of various conflicts and effectively erases the grey area into which individuals from each group in ultimately fall, as well as the possibility of mobility along this scale. The Serb perspective in *SAG* is represented by Veljko, one of the few remaining Serbs in Goražde out of the pre-war number of 5,600, most of whom "had left in the

pre-war exodus or in the overnight disappearance in May 1992" (*SAG* 155).[14] Instead of identifying himself by ethnicity, Veljko states: "I didn't behave like a nationalist. I was always a Yugoslav and now I am a Bosnian man. I had strained relations with other Serbs because of my views" (ibid.). These 'strained relations' were manifested by Veljko becoming a specific target for the nationalist Serbs surrounding the town: "[They] knew where he lived and showered his apartment with fire from a hilltop they commanded early in the war. His flat had been hit 250 times by bullets … and six times by shells" (156).

Another threat to the few remaining Serbs of Goražde was posed by refugees from towns destroyed by Serbs, who sought for retaliation by destroying Serb property, driving them out of their homes, and occasionally resorting to downright violence (157–159). Veljko survived under this crossfire: "They were people without anything, with members of their families slaughtered … But our Muslim neighbors didn't allow the refugees to do anything to us" (156). The complexity of the sentiments of the Muslims of Goražde towards their former friends and neighbors is further illustrated in the following chapter, "Can You Live with the Serbs again?", a double-page featuring several individuals answering the question presented in the title. The attitudes expressed here range from distrust and disbelief to differentiation between nationalist Serbs, or the 'Chetniks', and other Serbs (160–161). As stated by one interviewee: "They destroyed our lives, the Serbs, but also they destroyed their own lives. But most important to me is that not every Serb is a Chetnik. The Serbs who stayed got the same food, they carried water and got wood … they were in the same situation" (161). Again, the extraordinary nature of the war is here juxtaposed with the ordinary, shared nature of everyday life. On the other hand, the violent shattering of the structure of the ordinary was also one of the most traumatizing effects of this conflict, as revealed by the following statement: "I used to have

[14] At the time of Sacco's visit in 1995, Goražde was the only town in eastern Bosnia that was still under government control and had not been subjected to the ethnic cleansing of the Muslim population by the Serbs (*SAG* 155).

many Serb friends … I had a close friend named Miro, and it's possible he was a sniper shooting at my daughter, that he was one of those people who raped and slaughtered" (160).

Additional points of view to the overall narrative of *SAG* are presented by the inclusion of the role of the international community in the formation of the conflict. In the witness sections, official statements are often visually juxtaposed with images of individual suffering within single panels, pages, or chapters. Alternatively, the earlier established terminology defined by Groensteen could be applied here. As defined in the theory section, the 'frame' encloses a single panel, the 'hyperframe' a single page, and the "increasingly inclusive" 'multiframe' encompasses all the levels of "panel proliferation", from the strip to the whole book (30), which also includes the single chapter. Examples of the juxtaposition and subsequent collision of official and personal perspectives will here be drawn from the chapter "The '94 Offensive", in which Edin, Dr Begovic, and Nurse Demir recount their personal experiences during the Serb offensive on Goražde, while the historical narration presents the indecisiveness of the international community, as well as the reactions of U.N. officials and politicians within Bosnia.

One such example is the juxtaposition of an image of a young boy standing amidst the ruins of a shelled building with statements given by Bosnian Serb leader Karadžić [15] and Bosnian President Izetbegović. The boy's clothes are torn and a severed leg beside him accentuates the violent impact of the shelling, the continuation of which is visually emphasized with dust swirling around the boy and gathering into clouds above his head. In the previous panel, Karadžić states: "The Serbian state unilaterally proclaims peace in Goražde. With this, the Goražde crisis comes to an end" (*SAG* 180). The following panel presents the image of the boy accompanied with two boxes of text, the first of which reflects directly back across the gutter to the words of Karadžić with the simple comment: "But the Serb attack continued"

[15] After successfully eluding his indictment of 1995 for over a decade, Radovan Karadžić was captured in 2008 and sentenced in March 2016 by The Hague tribunal to 40 years' imprisonment for war crimes.

(ibid.). The larger box of text presents Izetbegović's words to U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali: "The so-called safe area has become the most unsafe place in the world … Neither you nor your personnel have done anything to use the mandate of all those resolutions to protect the people of Goražde or the credibility of the United Nations" (ibid.).

On the level of the multiframe of the chapter, Edin's detailed description of the desperate fight of a few scores of Bosnian men, armed only with rifles, against the overwhelmingly superior firepower of Serbian tanks and artillery (168–179), is juxtaposed with U.N. top military commander Lt. General Rose's depreciative commentary. Rose, who was overall critical of U.N. military intervention in the war (Silber and Little 326) states: "[The Bosnians] think that we should be fighting the war for them … How the hell did they let tanks down that route? One bloke with a crowbar could have stopped that tank. I think they basically turned and ran, and left us to try and pick up the pieces for them" (*SAG* 186–187).

On a personal level, the ones who were quite literally left picking up the pieces were the hospital personnel, including Dr. Begovic, whose testimony is accompanied with a series of small frames depicting the minutiae of emergency operations, amputations, and grieving relatives (181). The suffering of the victims, of which the casualty estimate of the U.N. High Commission of Refugees was 700 dead and nearly 2000 wounded (187), was also undermined by Lt. General Rose, according to whom "casualties had been inflated 'in order to shame the world into doing something'" (ibid.), even though even he had earlier admitted that Goražde was "on the brink of humanitarian disaster" (179).

Chute uses the terms *dialogic* and *cross-discursive* to describe a similar clashing of narratives in Art Spiegelman's *Maus,* an autobiographical account of the author's father's Holocaust experience and the complex relationship between father and son, which is widely considered one of the most important work within the subgenre of documentary comics ("The Shadow of a Past Time" 209). *Dialogic* here refers to the representation of "the competing

voices of autobiography and biography in one layered text", and in Chute's example "the artist's hand is the visibilized link between the personal voice of the primary witness and its translation, the voice of the secondary witness" (ibid.). *SAG* is not autobiographical in the same sense as *Maus*, but the competing voices are present in the personal and historical levels of the narrative, or in the "convergence of personal story with public history" (Dong 50).

Dong argues that this juxtaposition of the personal and the public, the subjective and objective, results in a "rich, in-depth documentation of the history of the town of Goražde and the experiences of its residents" (52). While I agree with Dong that the public and the personal in many ways merge into each other, they simultaneously clash and compete with each other. Chute exemplifies the notion of cross-discourse in *Maus* with the author's drawing *against* the verbal narration of his father, resulting in a "representational collision", as when Spiegelman chooses to represent the Auschwitz orchestra in *Maus*, even though his father insists that there was none ("The Shadow of a Past Time" 209). In *SAG*, the personal histories of the Goraždans are not contested by a cranky old man insisting on his own observatory skills, but by official statements made by public figures of the war. The joint witness account of Edin, Dr. Begovic, and nurse Sadija Demir of the 1994 Serb offensive on the town and its devastating consequences performs as a cross-discourse to the overlapping historical narrative.

In this section I have discussed the three narrative levels of *SAG*, the literary and visual devices employed in the representation of these levels, and the manners in which they contribute to the process of readerly engagement. Firstly, the usage of the word balloon as a container for full dialogue facilitates the familiarization of the reader to the subjects of the comic, as the word balloon allows the presentation of individual speech characteristics, as well as unuttered emotions. Also, the appendix of the word balloon as an indicator of the speaker requires the reader to recognize the recurring characters by their visual characteristics. Secondly, the interior monologue of the artist-narrator both familiarizes the reader with the

character and his inner thoughts and provides him/her with information that is unavailable to the other characters, such as comments that foreground events that are to be presented later. The artist-narrator also ‘speaks’ directly to the reader in interior monologue, thus engaging him/her to continue reading the story. Thirdly, the historical level provides the reader with background information crucial for the contextualization of the individual stories. Furthermore, the inclusion of citations of official figures and a bibliography authenticate the facts presented in the historical narrative, which, by extension, could be argued to apply to the contents of the individual interviews. This strengthens the journalistic contract by which the reader is convinced that the work s/he is reading is factual and based on research.

The following chapter will examine how both the familiarization process and the journalistic contract are reinforced on the visual level of *SAG*. The analysis will combine visual characteristics of comics with the New Journalistic literary devices of composite characterization, status details, and dramatic scenes. The central objectives of this chapter are to demonstrate how Sacco’s portrayal of his characters as active agents adds to the process of repersonalization, and how the visual narrative deepens the reader’s role to that of a participator. As will be evident, a comics reader is required to assign meaning both to individual panels and the interconnections and hierarchical relations between panels, frames, multiframes, and hyperframes.

4. “Take My Arms That I Might Reach You”

Having now established how the narrative of *SAG* is constructed predominantly on the verbal level and how the reader is engaged on the various narrative strata, the following chapter will focus on the visual content of the narrative. Firstly, I will discuss the different characters in the comic and their various functions, beginning with Sacco’s cartoon self Joe, continuing with the individualized characters whom Joe befriends and interviews, and finishing with the unidentified characters of mass scenes, scenes of atrocity, and scenes of the past. Sacco’s usage of the new journalistic literary devices of *composite characterization* and *status details* will here be analyzed together with the facial iconography of comics. Secondly, I will explore Sacco’s dramatization of especially past events, for which purpose the new journalistic technique of *the dramatic scene* will be closely connected to McCloud’s *panel-to-panel transitions* and the idea of *closure*.

Groensteen argues that the characters in comics take a superior position in relation to the textual narrative, in that the non-verbal element is generally perceived first when encountering a panel: “As a drawn element and as a generally privileged element in the composition of the image, its perception is quasi-instantaneous; the presence of the character is the salient information that the reader registers at the same instant in which his attention is directed by the panel” (76). After the absorption of this initial encounter and the additional information provided by the textual elements, the second look is that of an “informed gaze” – “a more detailed perception of the constituent parts and the attributes of the character” (ibid.). As noted previously, the visual and textual elements in Sacco’s work do not always directly interact within the same panel, in addition to which they sometimes counter, rather than supplement, each other. However, taken into account the earlier introduced multiframes of the chapter and the whole book, as well as the single panels and pages, the elements finally combine to construct this ‘detailed perception’ of both the characters and the war.

The characters of *SAG* can roughly be divided into four categories. The first category is solely represented by Sacco's cartoon self Joe, who, as earlier mentioned, functions as a focalizer and guide for the reader. Secondly, there are the individually identified characters, including both Goražd*a*ns and Sacco's fellow journalists, with whom Joe directly interacts in the story. The third category encompasses individually identified official figures, such as politicians and military personnel, the representation of which is derived, to use Groensteen's terminology, from 'prographic material' (41) such as televised speeches and photographs. The fourth category, which will be most thoroughly examined here, incorporates the generic and often unidentified characters of Serb soldiers, victims of atrocities, refugees, and townspeople. The characters of this last category are often presented in mass scenes featuring multiple characters.

According to Charles Hatfield, the cartoon self in an autobiographical comic shows "how the cartoonist envisions him or herself; the inward vision takes an outward form" (114). For this cartoon self to be formed, some degree of alienation needs to take place – the cartoonist must "regard himself as *other*, as a distinct character to be seen as well as heard" (ibid, original emphasis). In contrast to the realistic and detailed depiction of the other subjects, the character of Joe in *SAG* is drawn in a cartoony, even caricatural, manner with exaggerated features such as permanently dimmed-over glasses and a disproportionately large mouth hanging slightly ajar. Joe is frequently depicted either carrying a camera bag over his shoulder or a notebook in his hand. Following Hellmann's definition of the journalistic contract and the methods a journalist can use to strengthen this contract (29), the recurrence of these devices of objective recording emphasize Joe's status and trustworthiness as a journalist.

Regarding Sacco's representation of his cartoon self, especially the blank glasses and the fact that his eyes remain ever invisible to the reader have been assigned different symbolical interpretations. Walker interprets the glasses as a witnessing device, which enables

the reader to enter “dark places far from the tourist track” and which provides “a ‘white screen’ upon which trauma can be projected and reconstituted” (69) by the earlier introduced readerly process of *closure*. Walker’s interpretation thus assigns Joe’s glasses a function resembling that of a camera lens. Chute, on the other hand, takes a somewhat different approach: “… this blankness amidst so much visual elaboration and political and aesthetic pressure on the act of seeing is a surface mark of Sacco’s desire to cede the stories he solicits to others – to highlight … a modesty through formlessness in the face of other’s experiences” (*Disaster Drawn* 337).

On a more general note, Chute states that Sacco’s inclusion of himself as a comics character in the story serves as a reminder of the limited perspective provided by the camera lens in photojournalism, in contrast to that of the comics medium, which allows for the presentation of the dual perspective of both “the filter and the subject” (210). By “enabling the journalist both to inhabit a point of view and to show himself inhabiting it” (208), the comics medium transcends the perspectival limitations of photojournalism. This dual perspective also guides the reader’s understanding of the witness sections from which Joe is absent as a visual presence – from previous context, the reader interprets the witness sections as outcomes of Joe’s interviews with his subjects, which have later been visualised by Sacco in the role of the comics artist using his informed imagination. Furthermore, the earlier mentioned different temporalities of the comics medium again become a factor here, in that this duality not only allows the comics artist to employ different perspectives in space, but also in time. As Chute notes: “Sacco’s work materializes history from places where photography cannot travel” (210). The duality on the visual level reflects on the hierarchy between Joe and Sacco-the-narrator, which was earlier discussed on the level of verbal narration, with Joe lacking much of the information available to the narrator. The cartoony awkwardness of Joe amidst the almost photorealistic characters of the Goražd ans can therefore also be seen as a commentary of his status as an outsider to the reality of the comic – in the present of the comic, Joe is still only gathering material for the

construction of the reality of the comic, which is to take place in the present of the writing.

Another issue to take into consideration regarding the artist's cartoon self is readerly identification. As presented in the theory section, McCloud's theory suggests that the reader projects him-/herself onto a simplified, abstract character, while a more realistic image remains preserved for 'another' (36). Bartley, for instance, follows McCloud's precedent in her analysis of Sacco's work within the framework of Levinas' notion of substitution, stating that "readerly identification with Joe the character encourages us to identify ourselves with not just physical, but also moral ambivalence" (66). In Bartley's reading, Joe's expression of his mixed emotions in the previously presented chapter "America Man", in which he is confronted about not reporting on Srebrenica (ibid.), makes him "a representative of not the power of the West, but of its failure" (67). Through identification with Joe, the reader is thus similarly confronted with the accusations of indifference.

Even though I partially agree with this interpretation, I would argue that the structure of the comic calls for some further elaboration on the issue. Firstly, the simplified character of Joe with which the reader could identify him-/herself is often not present in the frame, and in the witness sections he is visually completely absent, although his presence is evident in panels situated in the present of the comic, in which the witness is depicted being interviewed. In the witness sections themselves, the narrative perspective is that of the realistically portrayed witness, and not that of the simplified character of Joe. Secondly, as was previously stated, the hierarchy of the narratives is such that the roles in which Sacco functions as a guide for the reader are those of the invisible narrator and the artist with his visual voice, rather than that of the character. The relative omniscience of both the verbal narrative and the visual perspective that we as readers are offered is not available for Joe in the present of the comic.

I would not, however, completely dismiss the idea of readerly identification

through the character of Joe, since the 'presence' of the reader is clearly supported by the earlier mentioned fact that the narrator 'speaks' directly to the reader. In my interpretation, Sacco's visual "[o]bjectification of the self" (Hatfield 115) invites the reader to similarly employ his or her "sketchy arrangement" of a mind-picture (McCloud 36) to the world of the comic, albeit to the borders, rather than inside of the frames. The reason for this mental metamorphosis is that for the reader to be able to conceive the portrayal of the drawn world of the comic as *reality*, and to interpret the events that take place in the gutter of this reality through his or her own experiences, some level of identification is needed. The reader does not literally become a comics character, but the realities of the drawn world and the real world must become mentally aligned, and this alignment takes place through the reader's identification as a figure belonging to the same reality with the drawn characters. The effect is, however, not that of participation, but that of watching. How, then, is this different to the experience of watching a film? The main difference, according to Chute, is that of *time* – the pace and duration of a film is given, whereas the comic, "a form in which stillness and motion exist together", invites the reader to set his/her own "pace of consumption" (*Disaster Drawn* 21–22). Richard Stafford suggests yet another impact of the reader's identification with the artist's cartoon self (rather than with the other drawn subjects) – "a sense of critical distance" (133). According to Stafford, through this critical distance Sacco "encourages the reader to take a reflexive relationship to the narrative, to consider her own position of privilege, and her own role as a spectator in relation to subjects represented" (ibid.).

In Bartley's interpretation of "America Man", the accusation of Joe's indifference to the fate of Srebrenica is extended from the individual to the whole Western community. Joe's reaction could be interpreted to stem from the accuser's identification of him as belonging to the very group from which he has endeavoured to distance himself – that of Western journalists. At the very beginning of *SAG*, the narrative presents the discussion

surrounding the town of Goražde and its position in the Dayton peace negotiations: “Foreign journalists endlessly discussing possible Dayton scenarios, pondered the sticky problem of Goražde’s presence deep in Serb-held terrritory. Some felt that a peace settlement would be facilitated if the Bosnian government traded the enclave to the Serbs for more territory around the capital, Sarajevo … ‘I wish Goražde would go away,’ I heard one American correspondent say” (*SAG* 3–4).

This final sentiment indicates the status of the town in the eyes of the foreign journalist to be reduced to an abstract entity, a single object on the negotiation table that could be ‘traded’ for another object. Sacco’s aim throughout the comic is to counter reductions like this by giving voices to the individual Goraždans, which is also voiced in his reaction to the accusation – rather than wishing for the town to disappear, he wants his friends to intervene and finally, as his distress grows, to get away from “these horrible, disgusting people and their fucking wars” (192). Notable here is also the fact that Joe resorts to the same sort of generalization as his accuser, F, as the reaction is not directed against F, but against ‘these people’ and ‘their war’, extending the cause of distress from an individual to a group.

The encounter with F in “America Man” partakes in Sacco’s process of repersonalizing the Bosnians by allowing the expression of negative emotion, adding another nuance to the depiction of individual characters. Furthermore, this scene highlights the fact that all individuals both represent themselves and a group or several groups, even though the identification of the group by an outsider might not always be to our liking. The former of these two points was earlier discussed with regard to the presentation of the personal narratives of the recurring, individualized characters in *SAG*, and will be returned to in the following section, the focus of which is on the detailed nature of the visual narrative of *SAG*. The latter point will here be shortly scrutinized, before moving on to analyze the composite construction of the unidentified characters.

As stated earlier, the extraordinary nature of the war and the often painful experiences of those who have been caught in its midst are in *SAG* frequently juxtaposed with scenes of ordinary life that are familiar to the reader. As Chute notes, Sacco attempts to reveal "the complexities of particular, war-torn ordinary people, examining and presenting details of their lives that are elided in mainstream media and journalistic enterprises" (*Disaster Drawn* 201). The recurring characters, such as Edin, Riki, and the 'Silly Girls'; Nudjejma, Kimeta, and Sabina, are portrayed as individuals, with personal habits, flaws, and pasts. In contrast to the caricatural depiction of Joe, the visual appearance of these characters is significantly more realistic and they are recognizable throughout the comic for example by clothing and hairstyle. As Chute notes, the realistic detail of the characters produces an "aesthetic effect on the reader" that differs from the 'projective' effect of identification with simple characters suggested by McCloud (220). Instead, Sacco's "emphasis is on producing recognition with the visually elaborated other" (221) and, in contrast to photography, on "*giving face* through drawing – making a picture as opposed to 'taking' it" (249, original emphasis).

SAG is not, however, just a collection of elaborate portraits and personal voices. As Daniel Worden points out, Sacco "uses individual characters and subjects as both interesting in and of themselves, and as figures who represent larger categories such as the nation, the dispossessed, the veteran, the optimist" (12). Worden exemplifies this with the scene of Joe's first encounter with Riki in *SAG*, in which Riki's spontaneous performance of "Hotel California" is followed by a handshake and the statement: "I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United States of America for what it has done for us" (*SAG* 25), as if Joe and his colleague Whit represented the whole nation. This interplay of individuality and collectivity in Sacco's work is, according to Worden, rooted both in "the confessional tradition in underground and alternative comics and … the tradition of immersive reporting consolidated by the New Journalism" (12). Besides a resident of Goražde and a fan of American pop culture, Riki himself

most obviously represents the category of ‘soldier’ or ‘veteran’. While he generally refuses to share details of his war experience, at one point he comments on the reality of the trench life in the mountains as cold and boring, with the only available activities being playing cards, rereading a copy of an old magazine, and sharing insults with the enemy (*SAG* 99). Riki’s boredom, discomfort, and general silence, combined with Edin’s recollection of the disorganized and heavily overpowered battle during the 1994 offensive, become representative of the war experience of the soldier category.

The chapter “Silly Girls” provides another example of an individual being recognized as belonging to a certain category. Sabina’s boyfriend, a Višegrad refugee identified only as ‘Dude’, asks Joe whether he likes Sabina. Joe laughs the question off: “Sure. But she’s taken already”, to which Dude replies abruptly: “No one likes Muslim girls” (55). As widely used as rape was as a weapon of war during the Yugoslav conflicts, *SAG* barely mentions this, aside from a short witness account about the repeated rape of women in a pregnancy ward in Foca (117–119). The reader thus needs additional background information in order to decipher the meaning of this cryptic statement regarding the category of ‘Muslim girls’. According to van Boeschoten, the EU and the Bosnian Ministry of Interior currently estimate the number of rape victims in the Bosnian War to be between 25 000 and 50 000 (44). The Serbian war propaganda was a significant factor in spreading this phenomenon: “Rape victims were dehumanized by associating ethnic and political labels with a notion of sexual promiscuity, thus legitimating the rape in the rapist’s eyes and freeing him from any restraints” (45). Van Boeschoten further notes that in the traditional Bosnian Muslim society, the perceived dishonor of a raped woman was often not redeemable even through revenge, a factor which the Serbs were clearly aware of: “the systematic use of war rape in the context of ethnic cleansing seems to be based precisely on a similar shared cultural code between perpetrators and victims” (46). In my interpretation, the shadow of enemy propaganda is what formulates Dude’s statement

above, and even though none of the ‘Silly Girls’ are specifically identified as victims of war rape, the potential of Goražde suffering the fate of the other enclaves and surrounding towns has, in the present of the comic, loomed over the town for years. Although Sacco does not present rape experiences other than Munira’s witness account of the pregnancy ward, he mentions that this story is only one of many brought to Goražde by the 60 000 refugees from surrounding areas (*SAG* 119).

The idea of *potential* is a key to understanding the significance of the recurring, identified characters in relation to the thousands who are not given individual voices, including those who no longer have a voice to give. At the beginning of the comic, Joe is asked why he has come to Goražde. He answers this question in interior monologue across a double splash page depicting several townspeople of different ages on a busy street: “Why? Because you are still here…not raped and scattered…not entangled in the limbs of thousands of others at the bottom of a pit. Because Goražde had lived, and – how?” (*SAG* 13–15). As Walker notes, “[e]ach person captured on the page represents both the potential horror of the war and the potential to survive” (78). Out of Edin’s closest group of friends, Edin is the only one who has survived, but the potential of the opposite outcome becomes evident through his narration of the fates of the other members of that group.

At the end of the chapter “The First Attack”, a double page opens with an image of Edin in the present, looking into the distance and recollecting how his neighbor told him about the revealing of a mass grave, into which seven men had been buried with a dog on top. In the following panels the temporality switches to the past to illustrate the scene of the reburial of the victims in a cemetery, accompanied by Edin’s narration: “It was terrible. Smelling. Worms. Death. We recognized them mainly from their clothes, but also from their hair…and the features of their faces. There was still skin. The total was seven…and from that seven, two were my best friends…” (*SAG* 92).

Edin's words are visually placed across a large panel depicting the seven bodies lying on the ground, with men in the foreground digging new graves and some twenty other men, including Edin, watching the scene in the background. The details provided by the verbal narration emphasize the details of the scene; several of the bystanders cover their noses against the smell, and a few have turned their backs to the horror of the scene. In the following panel, the two men identified as Edin's friends are further individualized, in addition to which the fate of a third friend is brought up:

> Izet's son, Rofa, was with me in school for 12 years. There was dirt in his stomach. Probably they'd cut open his stomach. Senad was with me four years in the same class. Senad's fingers had been cut from one hand, the other was shut tight. All of them were without penises. Edib was probably killed in the first attack, but we never found his body. He was married, he had a child. My best friends. Every one of them (*SAG* 93).

Edin's narration is presented within several boxes of text, with the names of the victims separated into their own units, followed by boxes containing the additional information regarding the person in question. The text boxes frame the images of the men, so that the names appear above their heads, and the description is placed on the right hand side, with the upper left corner of the box pointing straight into the individual wound.

Following Groensteen's notion of the privileged position of the visual elements on a comics page (76), the reader's gaze is first drawn to the horrific details of the men's death. After this initial impression, the division and placement of the text guides the gaze first to the name, then back to the visual element, and then to the description. With the final, 'informed gaze' (ibid.), the reader comes to recognize the victims as individuals both in life and death. This repersonalization extends to the other corpses, as well, and the 'mass grave' becomes the shared grave of several individuals. The final panel in this scene depicts Edin and a group of other men silent in prayer over the now individually covered bodies. The victim imagery of the unearthing of mass graves is familiar from mainstream media, for example regarding Srebrenica, but Edin's subjective narrative alongside Sacco's subjective, visual voice, change

the focus away from the numbing ‘mass’ of scattered bones and number plates often seen in these images. In Walker’s words, “Sacco asks us to see beyond the wounds and to see the people instead” (78–79).

Although most of the nearly thirty characters present in the scene described above are not identified by name, each is visually unique through details of, for example, clothing and hairstyle. In a conference presentation, Sacco points out the importance of detail in his drawing of characters: “… each face is individualized and that was important to me. I didn’t want to show a mass of people in the sense that they all look like a bunch of ants or something. To me, they’re all individuals who have suffered enormously, and even though none of those faces might be true to any particular individual … [t]he essential truth … comes across” (“Presentation from the 2002 UF Comics Conference,” point 20). This finally brings us to the application of the new journalistic literary device of *composite characterization* into the comics medium. Hollowell defines a composite character as “a person who represents a whole class of subjects”, which allows the journalist to “compress documented evidence from a variety of sources into a vivid and unified telling of the story” (30–31). Gail Sheehy’s prostitute composite ‘Redpants’, used as an example by Hollowell, functions as the protagonist of the story and, as a literary figure based on several interviews, is a composite of several voices (30), whereas Sacco’s generic characters appear in the background of the story, and are mostly composed out of different visual sources. In a sense, the function of these characters in *SAG* is more complex than that of ‘Redpants’ – Sacco does not endeavour to construct *one* character out of many but *many* out of many, in addition to which the classes of subjects to be represented are multiple. By doing this, Sacco counters the Western journalistic narrative of Goražde as a single, problematic entity that could be traded over the Dayton negotiation table.

The demands of the visual medium of the comic obviously also differ from a purely literary text. Consider, for example, the scene where the UN convoy arrives to Goražde

(*SAG* 4), as conveyed by the comic versus how it might be described in a literary text. The splash page of the comic is silent, except for the earlier mentioned comment of the American correspondent. The number of people depicted on the page lies somewhere between 150 and 200, and out of these over fifty of the ones closest to the viewer are individualized by visual details: patterns of clothing, headdresses and hairstyles, postures, and facial expressions. One little boy is standing on crutches, and another is running into the street, chased by his mother. The depiction of the surroundings is similarly detailed: the trees, the buildings, and the distinctive mortar shell marks on the street – identical to those that were in the capital painted red for remembrance and named 'Sarajevo Roses' – the minutiae of the scene seem almost endless. In a literary text, on the other hand, this amount of detail could certainly be conveyed, but the reading experience would be quite exhausting, and the mood of the scene would be different. The juxtaposition of Sacco's first impression of the town as a kaleidoscope of individual people with the other journalist's wish for the town as an entity to disappear would not produce a similar effect in the written medium. The pre-existing sources on which Sacco's composite characters of the various mass scenes are based on are arguably relatively easy to obtain from his own journalistic documentation.

However, when the narrative switches to the past, the comics artist must rely on the visually guided interviews in his construction of the composite characters. In the mass grave scene presented above, Edin provides the visual details for each person present, dead or alive. The artist then needs to use his informed imagination to construct the scene as a whole. The more hectic or chaotic the scene, the more the artist needs to fill in. For example, in the fighting sequence illustrating the 1994 Serb offensive on the town, a fighter participating in the action would be unlikely to register a large amount of visual details. In scenes like these, the concept of *inhabitation* becomes especially relevant. According to Chute, inhabitation "focuses our attention on how people remember and reenact their own histories through drawing, and on

how cartoonists endeavor to enter ethically into others' histories by materializing them on the page" (*Disaster Drawn* 263).

In an interview with Chute, Sacco explains the inhabitation process on a more practical note, as the visualization of, for example, the movement of the hands of a running person, or, when drawing dead people, as feeling the weight of the lifeless body (249–250). In another interview with W.J.T. Mitchell, Sacco further elaborates on this notion: "You have to inhabit other peoples' pain or other peoples' aggression" (qtd. in ibid. 250). On some occasions, Sacco's motivation for presenting a composite character might also be guided by an attempt to protect the person's privacy, as was the case with Sheehy's 'Redpants' earlier. For example, the rape victims of the pregnancy ward scene are not identified by name, but are referred to collectively as "those four women" (*SAG* 118), in addition to which they are not illustrated close-up. For the reader it is not clarified whether the protective element of non-identification is provided by the second-hand witness describing the scene or by the author. The people described in the scene, as well as the setting in which the event takes place, are, in any case, inaccessible to the artist. As in many of the witness scenes, the artist lacks the possibility of personal observation and possible documentation of. Thus, the construction of composite characters in the witness sections depend heavily on the visually oriented interviews, as well as the artist's own informed imagination and the process of inhabitation.

Scenes that take place further in the past demand even more rigorous background research and dedication to the process of inhabitation. A significant portion of the narrative of Sacco's second major work on Palestine, *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009), occurs in the year 1956 at the time of the massacres of Rafah and Khan Younis. The interviewees are mostly old men, and in many cases they reenact their own actions while reminiscing, for example by demonstrating how they were made to face a wall and raise their hands. The process of inhabitation thus extends to the interviewees, as well, as Chute notes: "If drawing suggests inhabiting the social,

physical, and emotional perspective of the other, what *Footnotes* also shows is how traumatized people, in their acts of memory, inhabit their own past selves" (*Disaster Drawn* 250). The artist, on the other hand, must here repeatedly inhabit both the victims and the soldiers beating and killing them. Apart from the interviewees, all the other characters in the past scenes are pure composites.

In *SAG* composite characters featured in scenes of earlier conflicts appear alongside the historical narrative level, for example in Sacco's illustration of the atrocities that took place between the different ethnicities in Yugoslavia during the Second World War – scenes for which no eyewitness accounts are available. One page illustrates both perpetrators and victims of all three ethnicities in three separate panels. The first panel depicts members of the Ustasha, the Croatian fascist movement, killing Serbian civilians. One of the soldiers is kicking a blond boy head first into a mass grave, another is about to slit the throat of a young woman, and the third one, a big man clad in a sleeveless shirt and a cap, is raising a club above the head of an old woman wearing a scarf. In the following panel, members of the Chetnik, the Serb nationalist movement, are laughing and boozing over the corpses of a group of dead civilians, either Croat or Muslim, in front of a burning village. The last panel depicts Partisans, soldiers of Tito's cross-ethnical Communist resistance force, shooting at Chetniks who are retreating along a hillside (21). The details of the violence in these examples is vivid, and as perpetrator images of atrocities must be relatively scarce especially regarding these past conflicts, the significance of the artist's imagination and the process of inhabitation become in these scenes more pronounced than in the previous example.

The individuality of composite characters, similarly to that of the identified characters, is enhanced by Sacco's lavish application of status details regarding clothing, hair style, and personal objects such as weapons. The details of setting and scenery further invigorate the overall atmosphere of the comic. Chute notes the influence of artists such as Bruegel and

Hieronymos Bosch specifically on Sacco's panoramic 'mass' images "in their saturation in detail and their desire to record everyday life – as well as in their composition, a wide view in which there is often no central object" (*Disaster Drawn* 216). Sacco himself comments on his desire to record the scenery and everyday life specifically of Goražde "– not 'town X' in Bosnia – but a very particular place, basically so that someone from the town would recognize it as his or her town" ("Presentation from the 2002 UF Comics Conference," point 19). The particularity of Goražde is underscored, for example, by Sacco's visual emphasis on the "strangely pre-industrial" (*SAG* 47) state of the town. Formerly a provider of 10 000 factory jobs, the war has destroyed all the factories, as well as access to electricity and running water (ibid.). Images of people chopping, stacking, and carrying firewood recur throughout the comic, adding to the sense of regression. Another repeated element, often depicted in the same panel, is the burned or otherwise destroyed car, which leads the reader to identify the scenery as belonging to a post-war period, rather than a pre-industrial one.

As noted earlier, Sacco's journalistic contract with the reader is strengthened by the repeated visual occurrence of Joe's camera and notepad, which reinforces the reader's interpretation of Joe as a character who not only observes but also documents what he sees and hears. The detailed nature of scenes and persons, especially in the present of the comic, is thus understood to be guided by his documentation. In scenes that take place in the past or in locations inaccessible to the artist, the outcome of the visually oriented interviews and the artist's informed imagination require support from pre-existing material produced by someone else, although Sacco does not specifically point to any such material. In one of the witness sections, "Around Goražde", located in the neighboring town of Višegrad, the verification of location is provided by the visual presence of a well-known construction – the central element of Ivo Andric's 1945 Nobel Prize-winning novel, *The Bridge on the Drina* – for which prographic materials such as paintings and photographs are readily available. In Andric's novel,

the timespan of which ends with WWI, this bridge represents “not merely a means of crossing from one isolated community to another, but a symbol of the links between men regardless of their cultural differences” (Hawkesworth 5), whereas during the Bosnian war these links were violently destroyed by the massacres committed on the bridge.

In *SAG*, Rasim describes himself as an eyewitness to the killing of 200–300 Bosniaks on the bridge during three days and nights (*SAG* 110). An image of the massive, recognizable pillars of the bridge is accompanied by the silent splash of a body being thrown into the river, and in the following panels a screaming child is dragged to the edge of the bridge by a soldier while another one slices the throat of a man (ibid.). The relationship between these panels exemplify what McCloud defines as a *subject-to-subject transition* (71), and as in the axe example presented in the theory section, the reader ‘participates’ (68) in the death of the characters in the gutter, between the panels (66). A couple of pages later (figure 1), Rasim describes his crossing of the bridge to reach a Red Cross evacuation point on the other side: “I saw a lot of blood, maybe ten meters around and two centimeters deep … and I saw three pairs of shoes, a man’s, a woman’s, and a child’s, full of blood. and [sic] I was walking through the blood” (115). In addition to the identifiable structure of the bridge, Rasim’s account is verbally verified by his repetition of the phrase “I was an eyewitness,” which occurs five times during his story. Furthermore, unlike in the other witness sections, here the interviewer makes himself verbally present through additional questions: “Were people resisting? Were they screaming? Were they tied?” (111). The recognizable structure of the bridge, the interviewer’s intervention, and the interviewee’s confirmation of his eyewitness status strengthen the journalistic contract by providing authentication to the scene.

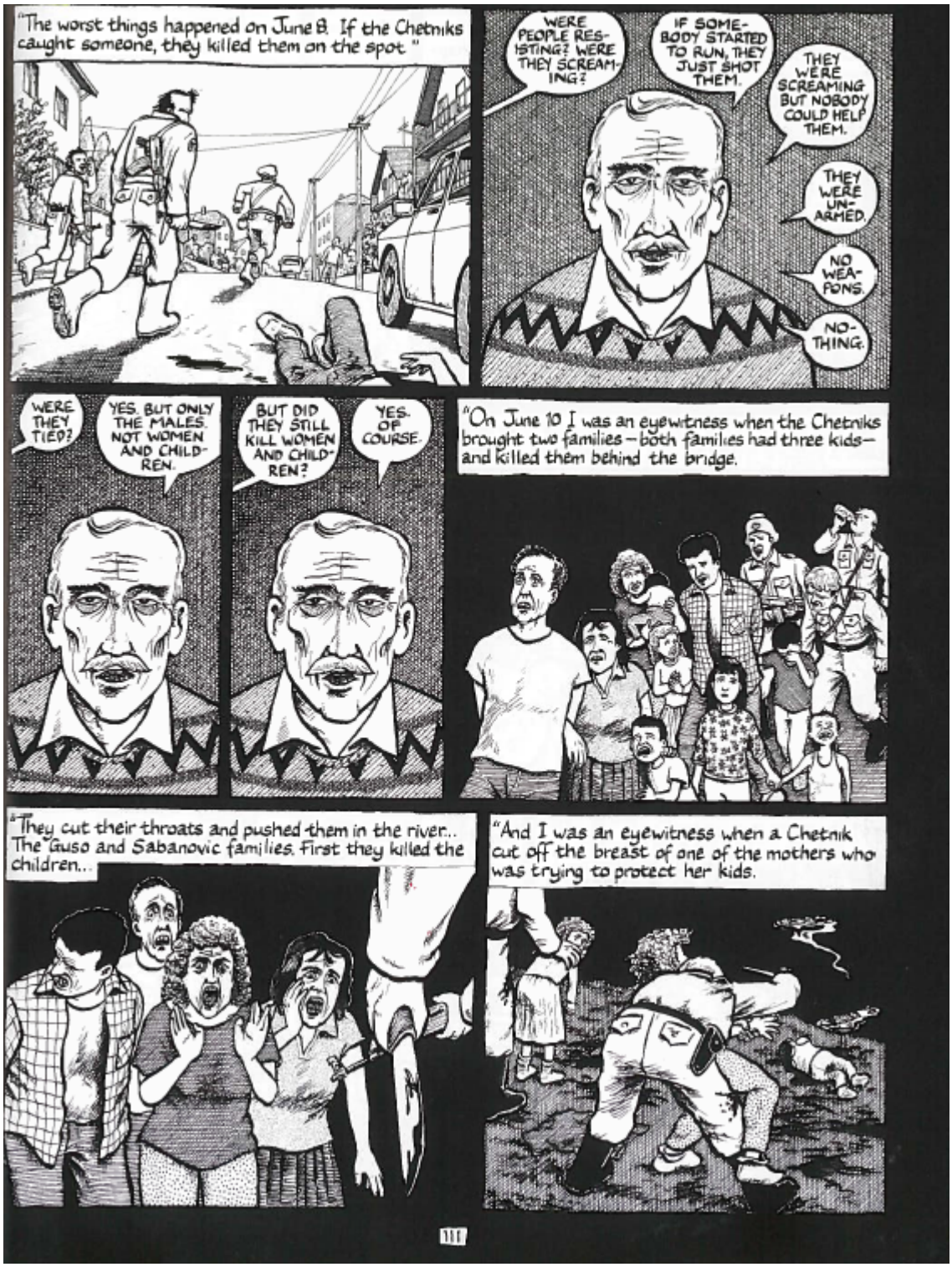

Figure 1. The interviewer's intervening questions and the interviewee's confirmation of his eyewitness status strengthen the journalistic contract (*SAG* 111).

Sacco's portrayal of inanimate, permanent structures, such as the bridge, is an example of 'reframing', defined by Groensteen as an alternative to the translation of a mental image into a physical one (41). In short, reframing involves the artist's interpretation of an unchanging, easily recognizable object based on a pre-existing image, such as a photograph. The different angles from which the bridge is framed and the added extraordinary elements of, for example, blood, suggest the process of reframing to be combined with the representation of a mental image in the creation of the drawn panel (ibid.). As proposed in the theory section, the prographic material is thus manipulated by the artist before it is reframed. This additional phase of manipulation to the process of reframing is even more pronounced in the creation of composite characters, especially in the witness sections. The artist merges the witnesses verbal description of the appearance of these characters with one or more pieces of prographic material into a mental image, which is then reframed as an individualized character.

Although the prographic material for most of the composite characters is untraceable, the example of the Sacco's drawing of the shelling victim in Sarajevo (figure 2.2.) that was presented earlier supports this argument. As noted before, the body of the central character of the panel is positioned differently than in Andrews' photograph (figure 2.1.), so that the victim's head and the fatal wound are turned towards the reader. In terms of ballistics, the reframed image is, in fact, impossible – for the body to be positioned as it is, the blast should have arrived from within the building behind the railing, but the building remains relatively undamaged. The artist's subjective manipulation of the pre-existing material turns the character into a composite, one who represents many, without destroying the 'essential truth' of the scene. The frame of the newly-created image here performs the function of *closure*, by which the panel's form and meaning become fixed (Groensteen 40).

Figure 2.1. In the prographic material the body of the central figure is facing away from the street. Photographer: Peter Andrews/ Reuters. Taylor, Alan. "20 Years Since The Bosnian War." *The Atlantic*, April 13 2012, Figure 12, https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2012/04/20-years-since-the-bosnian-war/100278/.

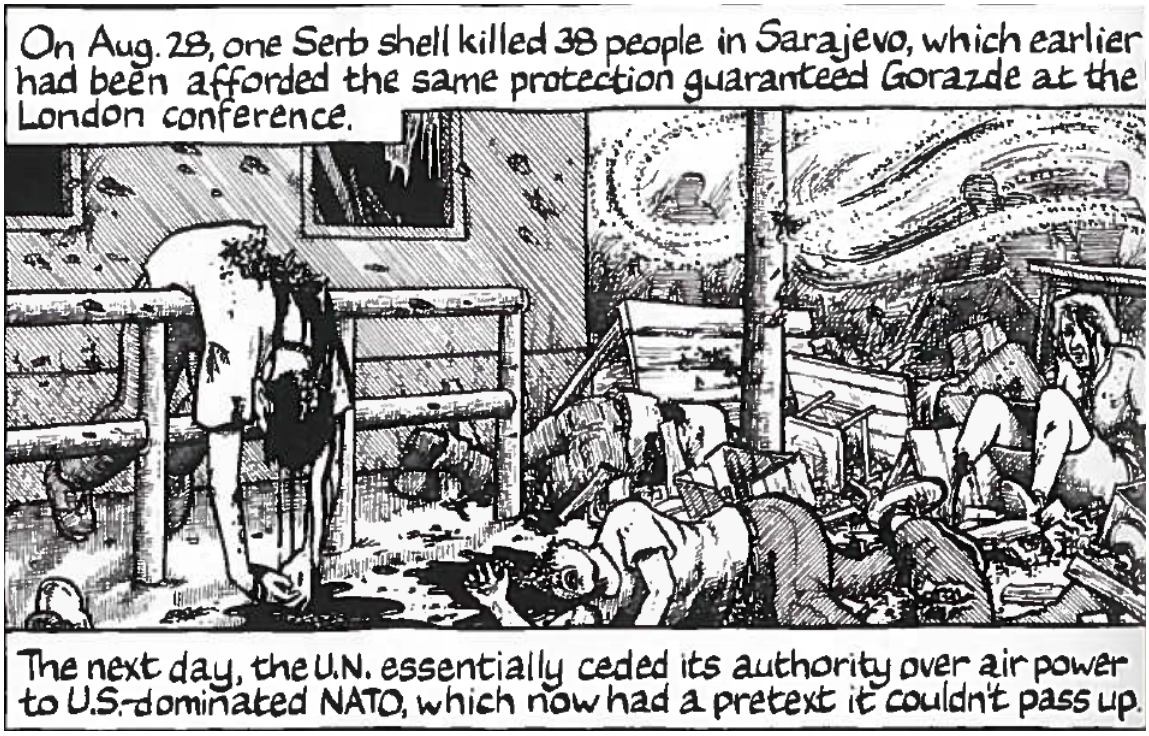

Figure 2.2. In Sacco's interpretation of the scene, the body of the central figure is turned around to face the street. (*SAG* 206).

As the examples presented so far in this thesis demonstrate, the new journalistic devices adapt seamlessly into the visual medium of the comic in Sacco's work. This final chapter will concentrate on *the dramatic scene,* defined by Hollowell as "[p]robably the most important fictional technique employed by the new journalists" (26), with a specific focus on the application of this technique on the visual level of *SAG*. The process of dramatization, or "the reconstruction of the story as the action unfolds" (ibid.) takes place throughout the comic, with the effect being enhanced by the layered structure of the narrative, the earlier introduced literary techniques, as well as additional ones such as foreshadowing and flashbacks, also commonly used by new journalists (ibid.). As was noted regarding the verbal narrative, the scenes chosen to be presented also undergo a process of selection in order for the artist to achieve his "dramatic purposes" (71). Sacco's choice to incorporate a number of elements familiar to the reader, such as pizza and American rock ballads, as well as tranquil scenes of social gatherings and casual conversations add to the reader's understanding of the war as an extraordinary event impacting ordinary people.

As Sacco himself has noted: "The approach I wanted to take was to let the reader get to know these people in the town as I got to know them … [a]nd then, show the crimes that began, that happened to them so that the crimes seem even more egregious in a certain sense because now you as the reader know these people" ("Presentation from the 2002 UF Comics Conference", point 52). The familiarization and individualization of Sacco's characters counters the victimizing narrative commonly presented by objective journalism. Kozol describes how Holocaust imagery was presented by the Western media: "Generalized photographs of extermination camp survivors took precedence over factual specificity about particular places or people. This level of generality privileged a universalized representation of victimization over the historical and political contexts that helped constitute these conditions" (4). Similarly, regarding the Kosovo conflict, Kozol notes that due to a lack of access to scenes of "torture and

repression," Western photojournalism focused on "pictures of fleeing refugees and crowded refugee camps" (2). Sacco's process of devictimization is further reinforced by his representation of the characters as active agents, who try their best to survive the extraordinary conditions of the war.

As remarked earlier regarding Nina, the hostess of the pizza night, the Goražd ans had to journey under extreme conditions to the Grebak base behind Serb lines for basic supplies, a trail along which Nina lost her father (*SAG* 10). This scene, set at the beginning of the comic, foreshadows Edin's later narration of his personal experience of the trek in the chapter "White Death". A literary (journalistic) account would need to fill a number of paragraphs to develop a detailed verbal portrayal of a character's experiences, but the comic allows for a sparsity of words in exchange for a visual depiction. While the timeline and main external circumstances of the ordeal are established by Edin's first-person verbal witness narrative, the details of the external environment and the overall mood of the chapter are mainly conveyed visually. The exhaustion on the faces of the travellers, the bodily composures of those defeated by their burden and the cold, the trail bordered with abandoned supplies, are all only present on the visual level. "White Death" provides a perfect vantagepoint for the analysis of Sacco's use of the different panel-to-panel transitions defined by McCloud.

The chapter opens, as all the witness sections do, with a close-up of Edin's face as he is being interviewed by Sacco in the present of the story (*SAG* 133). Through a *scene-to-scene transition* (McCloud 71), the tempus is then switched to the past, with the following panels illustrating Edin and his family doing domestic chores; baking, harvesting potatoes and fruit, and milking (*SAG* 133). On a purely visual level, the hyperframe of the page conveys a sense of pastoral tranquillity which, following Groensteen's notion of the superiority of visual to verbal elements (76), is the first impression that the reader receives. The transition type active

here is the *aspect-to-aspect transition*, which "sets a wandering eye on different aspects of a place, idea, or mood" (McCloud 72) in order to establish a sense of these (79).

McCloud notes that while this type of transition is rare in the Western comics tradition, it is commonly used in Japanese comics (78–79). In these scenes, "time seems to stand still", and a high level of readerly participation is demanded for the construction of a unified whole out of the given fragments (ibid.). The large, white letters presenting the ominous title of the chapter, however, break the calm mood of the hyperframe and draws the attention to the verbal content. Groensteen's definition of the *readerly function* of the frame, "an invitation to stop and to scrutinize" (54) encompasses "an implicit reading contract … the title and the first panels are promises of a certain mood, of a reward exchanged for the reader's attention" (55). The initial understanding of the calmness of the scene is immediately contradicted by the title and Edin's first words in the first panel: "We made a mistake" (*SAG* 133). This contradiction and the foreboding nature of the title and Edin's words thus come to form the reading contract into a promise of hardship and death.

In the following pages, Edin's personal narration, accompanied by the historical narration, provide information about the deteriorating food situation of Goražde – the only sporadically successful arrival of UN convoys, the looting and trading, the starving children begging from door to door (134–135). *Subject-to-subject transitions* (McCloud 71) guide the reader through these different aspects of the situation on the visual level. Similarly to the scene-to-scene and aspect-to-aspect transitions, McCloud claims that this type of transition requires a high level of "readerly involvement" and "deductive reasoning" for the transitions to be understood as meaningful (ibid.). However, McCloud excludes the impact of verbal narration from his analysis of the different transitions, and as these images are provided ample verbal support, the need for readerly deduction is in this example less significant than in McCloud's definition.

These opening pages present the circumstances that forced Edin, among others, to embark on the trek to Grebak, a journey along which tens of Goraždans were killed by exposure, or the White Death, and others by landmines or ambushes (*SAG* 136). Much of the journey had to be undertaken by night, due to which the panels illustrating Edin's experience are dark and meticulously cross-hatched. The interior monologue focuses on Edin's physical and mental struggle in a situation where to take pity of those less capable would be suicide, and the only way to survive is to focus one's eyes ahead: "I was tired. I didn't know who they were … I wasn't interested. My main thought was to stay alive, to be strong. You can't think about anything, only the way, how long the walk is, will you see your family again? your friends? girlfriends?[sic]" (*SAG* 142).

The panels accompanying this piece of monologue depict Edin from different angles, struggling under his burden in a seemingly endless forest. The transition type between the panels is again that of *aspect-to-aspect transition*, but unlike the opening page, the mood conveyed here is that of exhaustion and desperation. The text is placed in narrow boxes along the top border of each panel, and the final panel on the page is completely silent. Returning to Groensteen's definition of the *rhythmic function* of the frame, by which the "'text' of comics obeys a rhythm that is imposed on it by the succession of frames" (45), the 'rhythm' of this page is slow, transmitting a sense of endless struggle. Although these panels are not completely silent, the effect of "narrative deceleration" (Banita 62) is similar to that of a silent panel. The chapter ends with a close-up of Edin's face, uttering the single most important word motivating the struggle: "Food" (*SAG* 147).

As Chute notes, Sacco often engages the opposite rhythmic function in his work: "In its detailed density, Sacco's comics calls attention to the issue of pace" (*Disaster Drawn* 202). Especially *Palestine* displays images packed with visual details, with the verbal elements scattered across panels and panel borders in narrow boxes of text. While the impact of this

density might at first glance appear as hectic, or even chaotic, Chute argues that this technique actually "encourages the eye to slow down, to tangle with the verbal and visual detail of the palimpsestic page" (ibid.) in an "often awkward and time-consuming" rhythm (204). According to Chute, "[it] is this contradictory flow of movement that a comics page, unlike film or traditional prose narrative, is able to hold in tension, as narrative development is delayed, retracked, or rendered recursive by the depth and volume of graphic texture" (ibid.).

Although *SAG* is significantly more restricted in form than its predecessor, the combination of acceleration and deceleration (ibid.) is here, too, used to some extent. For example, Dr Begovic's testimony of the hectic reality of the hospital during the 1994 offensive is illustrated with nine small panels on a single page, each depicting a detail of the treatment of the victims (*SAG* 181). The crowded page and the jumping from patient to patient between panels create the effect of acceleration, while the details of the images and the placement of the verbal narrative as a continuous band along and across the upper borders of the panels force the reader to decelerate and 'wade through' the page (Chute *Disaster Drawn* 204). Groensteen designates this dual rhythm to the function of the frame: "Each new panel hastens the story and, simultaneously, holds it back. The frame is the agent of this double maneuver of progression/retention (45).

In addition to scenes of action, the medium of the comic also allows for the visual dramatization of the impact of trauma, of the unspeakable left beyond the scope of verbal representation. In a piece of conventional war reportage, it would be unlikely to come across a photograph of a person turning away from the reporter, refusing to tell his or her story. On one hand, photographing an incident of refusal would not comply with the journalistic code of ethics, which highlights a private person's right to control their personal information, as well as urges the journalist to avoid intrusiveness and to "[s]how compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage" ("SPJ Code of Ethics"). On the other hand, the density and

informational requirements of a regular news story would most probably result in the exclusion of a non-story such as this refusal. The length and scope of a work of comics journalism, as well as its visual/verbal structure, not only allows for the inclusion of such incidents but also includes them in a manner that provides subtle but striking commentary both on the war voyeurism of a (Western) reader and the nature of trauma.

"Drina", a short chapter which plays on the name as signifying both the river flowing through Goražde and a popular label of cigarettes commonly used for trade and wages after the heavy inflation of monetary currencies, introduces three refugee women from neighboring towns, each in her own panel, and three levels of refusal (*SAG* 106). The first woman, a refugee from Višegrad, is depicted turning her head away with closed eyes and a look of agony on her face, accompanied with a box of text "This woman didn't want to tell us what happened to her husband in Višegrad" (ibid.). The woman in the second panel is described as reluctant to tell her story and refuses to go into detail about the atrocities she has witnessed: "I haven't told you everything. I've seen people with their eyes cut out" (ibid.). Her eyes are locked in a 'thousand yard stare' somewhere in the distance, and her hands are drawn clutching each other tightly. The third woman, a refugee from Foča, recounts her story to Sacco, but then starts "shaking so hard she had to sit against the wall" (ibid.). She is portrayed sitting with her knees drawn close to her body and a look of deep shock on her face, with a child beside her trying to offer some comfort, looking towards the interviewer as if pleading for help. In these scenes the dramatization, or the reconstruction mentioned by Hollowell, mainly takes place within the visual field, while the verbal narrative could be considered equivalent of a "summary of the events" (Hollowell 26).

It should also be taken into consideration that these images and the accompanying text boxes do not exist in isolation, as they might in a news article. The reasons behind these refusals and, subsequently, the stories behind them are implied in previous and following

chapters and panels. The panel following that of the third woman is a half-bleed of the river Drina flowing into the page and into Goražde, carrying bodies of people massacred in her hometown Foča, a town located upriver from Goražde (*SAG* 106). One of the preceding chapters has illustrated the earlier discussed revealing of the mass grave of the seven tortured and mutilated Goraždan men (92–93). The chapter following the refusals is the one where Rasim recounts the massacres on the bridge in Višegrad. Rasim's witness account also reveals the fact that while some refugees managed to get out of the town on Red Cross convoys, the men were often separated by Serbian soldiers and killed along the route (117).

The more thorough dramatization of these witness accounts echo into those of the women discussed above, hinting towards atrocities that they might have witnessed or been subjected to, and thus towards the reasons for their refusal or inability to share their stories. While the occasions in which Sacco's previously mentioned *informed imagination* do not provide the reader with all the details or an explicit result, the context offers enough information for the reader to use his or her own imagination, to fill in the gaps and reach for closure within a kind of extended gutter that spans throughout the whole book. In other words, as Walker states, "Sacco's work requires the reader to mentally construct the reality of trauma" (69). Furthermore, Sacco's subjective choice of including these images on one hand, and of not elaborating on the stories of the traumatized women on the other hand, highlights the fact that not everything can, or perhaps even should, be known.

In the previous example the women's distress was presumably triggered by Sacco and his questions. As noted earlier in this thesis, Sacco's interviews are specifically visually oriented, a fact that here needs to be considered regarding the traumatic nature of the events that are being depicted. As Sacco himself formulates in his preface to *Journalism*: "In film terms, a cartoonist is a set designer, a costume designer, and a casting director" (xii). Besides extensive research and visually oriented questions, he also attempts to trace the footsteps of his

subjects whenever possible in his pursuance for accuracy. In *SAG*, many of the footsteps are untraceable, as those of the examples above, since the towns of Foča and Višegrad, as well as the base of Grebak, were under Serb occupation during the time of Sacco's visit to Goražde in 1995. [16] However, even in cases where the footsteps are traceable and the witness account given, Sacco has in some instances chosen to visually dramatize the outcome of the event as it exists in the present of the story, rather than creating a visual reenactment of the event itself.

An example of this is presented at the beginning of the comic, where Sacco describes the development of his journalist-translator relationship with Edin: "And I came back three times, and each time I sought up Edin to help me put the pieces of the story together … sometimes the pieces he showed me were his own" (*SAG* 16). The last of the three panels across which this short narrative unfolds depicts the wreck of a small car, accompanied by a separate box of text clarifying the significance of this particular wreck: "The car of one of his best friends, killed on the first day of the first attack on Goražde" (ibid, figure 3). This scene takes place during the developmental stage of the comic, in which Sacco attempts to let his characters 'grow on the reader', before introducing the traumatic events that they have encountered.

Even though Sacco has chosen not to provide the details of the incident of which the burned car is the outcome, the grief for the lost friend is clearly visible in the posture of Edin's figure standing in front of the car. In this scene the closure, or fixing the meaning of the adjoining panels is alleviated by the verbal narration – the reader is distinctly told that the owner of the car was Edin's friend and that he is dead. However, the earlier suggested fluidity of the meaning fixed by closure becomes evident when considering the relationship of this scene to the earlier presented one of the mass grave, which takes place several chapters later. In this later scene, the reader finds out that Edin has, indeed, lost *all* of his best friends during the war, a

[16] In accordance with the Dayton Agreement of 1995, Foča and Višegrad are presently part of Republika Srpska.

revelation that in retrospect adds a foreboding element to the meaning of the former scene and its verbal narration.

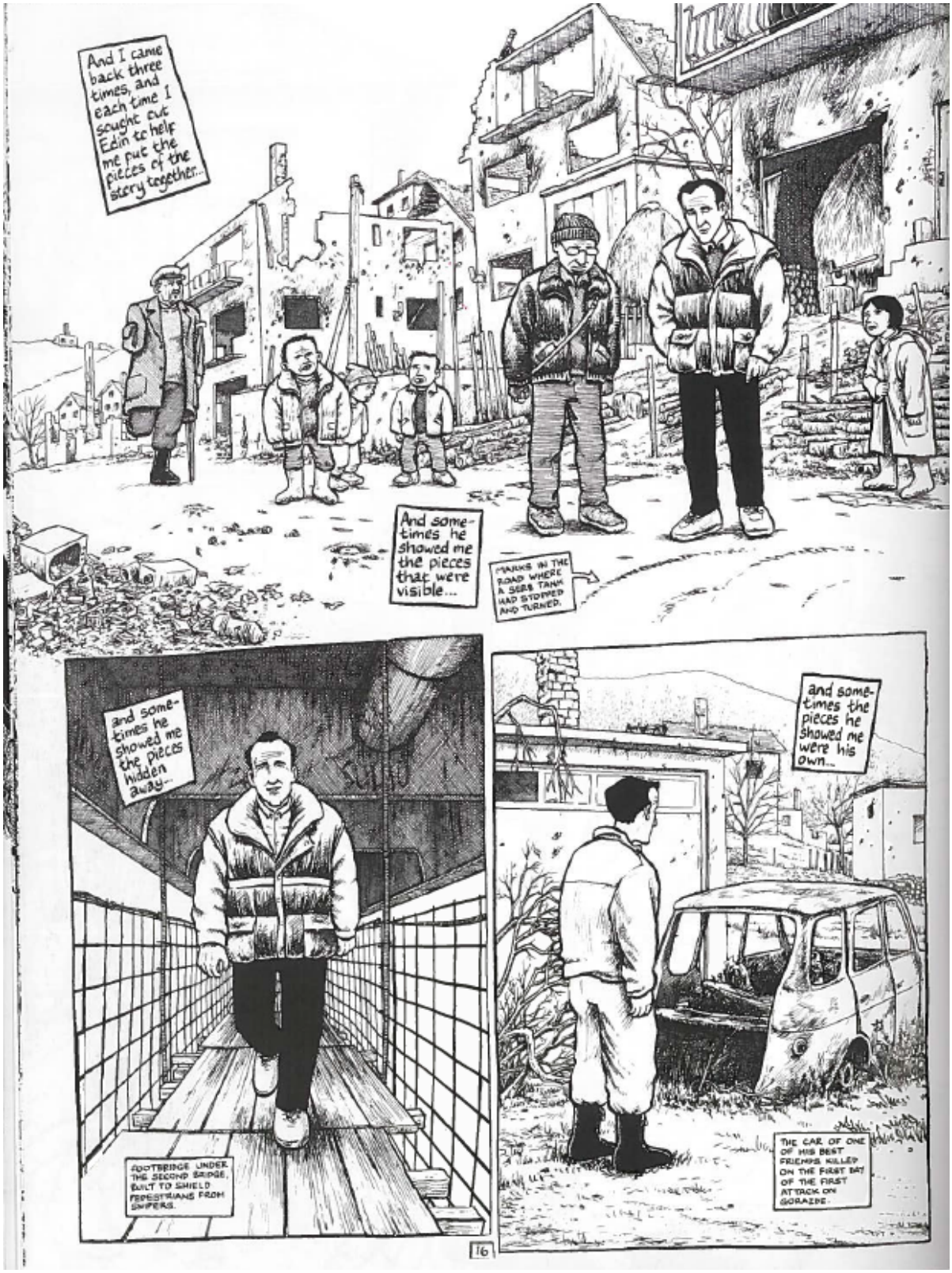

Figure 3. These frames highlight the trauma of the war both through physical wounds and ruins and through Edin's grief over his lost friends (*SAG* 16).

The examples above illustrate the potentially traumatic effect of the witness being encouraged to revisit his/her memories, of showing or telling his/her 'pieces of the story' to the journalist. Temporally, the traumatic events described and visually dramatized in *SAG* occur relatively close to the time of Sacco's visit to Gorazde, within a timespan of only a few years. In *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009, henceforth referred to as *FiG*), Sacco leads his subjects over fifty years back in time to relive their experiences during the 1956 massacres of Rafah and Khan Younis, two towns located on the Gaza Strip. In contrast to *SAG*, where the focus of the narrative is on the individual war experiences of the Goraždans, in *FiG* Sacco attempts to reconstruct the collective, shared memory of the events through the testimonies of the Palestinian men who experienced it. The past unfolds through fragments provided by tens of interviewees, each of whom are individually identified by name or number. Furthermore, the effect that the traumatic events of the past have on the present is highlighted by the fact that unlike *SAG*, in *FiG* the dramatization of the witness testimonies is not separated from the present narrative in any way, but the present and the past are shown as continuously overlapping.

An example of this is the testimony of "Anonymous 4," who recalls how the men of Rafah were forced to gather at the school building of the town, where several of them were subsequently shot or beaten to death. A half-bleed panel overlapping two pages shows a row of men lined up against a wall, with Israeli soldiers standing behind them with rifles in hand. This scene of the past is followed by three smaller panels, in which "Anonymous 4," an old man in the present, is reenacting the scene for Sacco and his interpreter, standing against the wall of the room with his hands in the air as he recollects the unfolding of the scene: "I stood many times against the wall. Walk and stop! Shouting at me to stop! Stop! Walk! Stop! Walk! The whole time my hands were in the air. My face to the wall" (*FiG* 227). As Chute observes, the space of the comics page thus "graphically places the witnessing self in the past with his or her younger body" (*Disaster Drawn* 236).

Andrés Romero-Jódar argues that Sacco's visual juxtaposition of the present and the past in his reconstruction of the massacre through the testimonies of several survivors "emphasiz[es] the sense of shared memory" (79). Romero-Jódar continues: "Through this visual technique that can only be achieved through the language of the graphic novel, the … narrators become representatives of the myriads of heads that are depicted in the drawing and … representatives of the collective memory of suffering of the Palestinian population of that day" (80). Sacco's method of encouraging his subjects to 'relive' the past is not, however, completely unproblematic: "One of the defining features of psychic trauma is the re-enactment of the traumatic event, as the individual … responds to the overwhelming event or situation by compulsively acting it out as if it were taking place again" (Romero-Jódar, 79). While this method is clearly central for Sacco's quest for the 'essential truth' of these conflicts, at the end of *FiG* he contemplates the distress that he might have caused his subjects:

> How often we forced the old men of Rafah back down this road lied with soldiers and strewn with shoes. How often we shoved the old men between the soldiers with sticks and through that gate. How often we made them sit with their heads down and piss on themselves. In the end, when we'd finished with them, we let them break down the wall and run home … Suddenly I felt ashamed of myself for losing something along the way as I collected my evidence, disentangled it, dissected it, indexed it, and logged it onto my chart. And I remembered how often I sat with old men who tried my patience, who rambled on, who got things mixed up, who skipped ahead, who didn't remember the barbed wire at the gate or when the mukhtars stood up or where the jeeps were parked, how often I sighed and mentally rolled my eyes because I knew more about that day than they did (383–385).

This internal monologue is juxtaposed with a final interview scene, in which an old man, Abu Juhish, breaks down in tears as he struggles "to tell us even sketchy details of his story". Sacco's interpreter encourages him to continue: "Try to remember. What is the worst thing you remember from that day?" Abu Juhish's answer is presented in two small and thinly outlined word balloons, each with a single word in its centre: "Fear. Fear" (384). The final panel on the page depicts the interviewer and the interviewee in profile, facing each other. The old man's eyes are closed and he is leaning slightly forward, crying. Sacco's cartoon self looks as

if he were on the brink of tears himself, one of his eyes partially visible from behind the glasses. In this penultimate scene of the book the contrast between Abu Juhish's words and the final phrase of Sacco's monologue – "…I knew more about that day than they did" – reveals the limitation of the extent to which we can truly understand someone else's traumatic experiences. Neither fact-collecting nor the visual inhabitation process provide access to the inner workings of the mind of another – Abu Juhish's fear is, ultimately, his own.

As stated in the summary of the previous chapter, the verbal levels of narrative engage the reader through familiarization, recognition, and authentication. On the visual level, the reader participates as an active agent in the construction of the story. Firstly, some level of identification with the comics characters is needed in order for the reader to understand the reality of the comic to be essentially the same as the one s/he him-/herself inhabits. Secondly, unlike for example the medium of a film, in a comic the reader sets the pace for the unfolding of the story. Sometimes the positioning of the panels on a page explicitly guides the pace of reading, for example in the hectic hospital scene in which the verbal narration runs along and across multiple small panels packed with visual information. Finally, the reader fills in the gaps of narration through closure, assigning meanings to individual panels, pages, and chapters. To some extent, these meanings might vary depending on, for example, the reader's own experiences or background knowledge.

5. Conclusion

As suggested in this thesis, Sacco's comics journalism offers valuable insights into the realities of war. Scenes of violence, destruction, and death are familiar for many readers from news imagery, but where individual news photographs frequently reduce their subjects into the generic roles of victim or perpetrator, the scope of the comic enables a more nuanced view. The juxtaposition of the extraordinary circumstances of the war with the normalcy of the everyday life led by people even under the harshest conditions creates a sense of familiarity. Sontag's conclusion regarding photographs, presented in the introduction to this thesis, was that by looking at images of violence the viewer might develop an understanding of the fact that "human beings everywhere do terrible things to one another" (119). In contrast, reading Sacco's works could be argued to lead to an understanding that human beings everywhere are just human beings – capable of horrible things, but also wonderful things, and vain things, and trivial things. This understanding might also indicate the realization of the reader that the extraordinariness of war or some other conflict could breach the normalcy of his/her own life, as well. The subjects of *SAG* are not defined as victims, but portrayed as individuals, as complex characters each with their own stories, dreams, and ambitions, but also with their own, potentially traumatic war experiences that might reflect on their lives long after the war is over.

In addition to the potential devictimization and repersonalization of the subjects of the comics, the medium of comics journalism, as well as other subjective modes of reporting, enable the journalist to express his/her own experiences of the reporting situation. Rather than an objective recorder of events, a subjective journalist brings him-/herself into the story, interacts with the subjects and is allowed even negative emotions regarding the subjects and the circumstances. Especially in situations that are unfamiliar to the reader, the initial outsider point of view of the journalist facilitates the process of familiarization, thus bringing the reader closer to the story.

In this thesis, I have demonstrated how this familiarization process functions in *SAG* and how the reader is involved in creating meanings in the comic. I have combined the literary devices commonly used by New Journalists with visual techniques used in comics in my analysis of the narrative and characters of *SAG*. The first analysis chapter mainly concentrated on the three levels of verbal narrative in the comic, and described how each level contribute to readerly engagement. Firstly, the incorporation of full dialogue within the versatile word balloon enables the comics artist to express individual speech traits of the characters, as well as emotions and volumes of speech. The word balloon also attributes the spoken words to the speakers without verbal specification, which requires the reader to recognize the recurring characters based on visual cues. Secondly, the personal narration of the comics journalist and his interviewee's, presented in interior monologue, provides the reader with insight into the thoughts of the characters, as well as issues information that is unavailable to the other characters in the scene. The reader is also on occasion engaged further by being addressed directly by Sacco's cartoon self. Thirdly, the 'official', verifiable information presented on the level of historical narration displays background information that is crucial for the contextualization of the individual war experiences within the bigger picture of the war. Simultaneously, the juxtaposition of official statements with conflicting visual images remind the reader that the truths of war are multiple, that the ones offered by political and military authorities might be far removed from the truths of individuals.

The second analysis chapter centralised on the characters of *SAG* and their actions, and determined how readerly participation takes place. Firstly, the various categories of characters and their functions were introduced. The focalizing character of Joe, as well as the recurring characters such as Edin and Riki, enable readerly identification, which facilitates the reader's recognition of the drawn world of the comic as the same world in which s/he him-/herself resides. Through these familiar characters, the process of identification and recognition

extends to the unidentified composite characters, as well. Secondly, the analysis demonstrated how the pace of reading is set by the reader and how the content and positioning of the panels contribute to this pace. The journalistic contract was also shown to be strengthened by visual details that authenticate the locations in which the events take place. Finally, the analysis established how scenes are visually dramatized in the comic, and how the reader interprets these scenes by actively participating by filling in the gaps and assigning meanings to the various visual components.

A specific feature of drawn forms of documentation is that the pen is not frozen in time or space like a camera is. As presented in this thesis, a comics journalist can provide visual representations of events that take place in the past or in locations that cannot be reached. This applies for autobiographical or documentary animation film, as well, such as *Waltz with Bashir* (2008), in which the Israeli director Ari Folman traces his lost memories of his participation as a soldier in the Lebanon War of 1982. In contrast to Joe Sacco's comics, *Waltz with Bashir* displays surreal dream sequences which illustrate the few vague memories that the protagonist has of his war experience. Images derived from dreams and other imaginations also feature in Aleksandar Zograf's *Regards from Serbia: A Cartoonist's Diary of a Crisis in Serbia* (2007), in which Zograf documents his surreal perception of life in the Serbian town of Pancevo during the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the early 1990's and NATO's bombing campaign against Serbia during the Kosovo War of 1999. At the time of the writing of this conclusion, the English translation of Canadian comics artist Guy Delisle's latest book, *Hostage* (2017) has recently been published. Best-known for his autobiographical comic-form travelogues of his trips to destinations such as Burma and Pyongyang with the MSF, Delisle's latest work is an account of MSF administrator Christophe André's time as a hostage in the Caucasus region in 1997.

As is evident from the examples presented above and elsewhere in this thesis, the comics form seems to flourish at the moment. However, there is always a flipside to the coin; as Hillary Chute points out, “cartoons have [recently] been at the center of major international controversies over images” (*Disaster Drawn* 256). Chute refers to the 2006 incident of *Jyllands-Posten*, the Danish newspaper that published offensive cartoons featuring Prophet Muhammad, and the 2015 terrorist attack against the satirical French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris after the magazine had published similar images. Twelve people lost their lives in the attack against *Charlie Hebdo*, and the pictures published by *Jyllands-Posten* incited protests that, according to Chute: “led to more than 200 deaths in Nigeria, Libya, Pakistan, and Afghanistan” (ibid.). As the two comics artists best-known for their “picturing [of] historical violence – and for balancing the violence that can be inherent in images themselves with intellectual probity,” both Art Spiegelman and Joe Sacco were asked to comment on the Paris attack shortly after the incident (257). Spiegelman defended the publication of the Muhammad cartoons and the “right to insult” (260), whereas Sacco took an entirely different standpoint. In his one-page comic response to the attack, published by *The Guardian* and titled “On Satire”, Sacco contemplates on the notion of free speech: “When we draw a line, we are often crossing one too … but perhaps when we tire of holding up our middle finger we can try to think about why the world is the way it is … and what it is about Muslims in this time and place that makes them unable to laugh off a mere image” (panels 7–9).

In recent years, conflicts and natural disasters have driven millions of people away from their homes to seek refuge. Most refugees stay in internal displacement within their countries of origin, and a significant percentage end up in neighboring countries. The terrorist attacks committed by a handful of individuals among those who have sought refuge in Europe have, at least partially, contributed to the rise of nationalism and anti-Muslim sentiment in several European countries. Even when the sentiment is not as extreme, the refugees are

frequently reduced to mass nouns and numbers, both in official and unofficial outlets. In short, the refugees are seen either as victims or potential perpetrators, both of which depersonalize these individuals. Works such as Sacco's that have the ability to repersonalize and devictimize the perceived other are now more important than ever.

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